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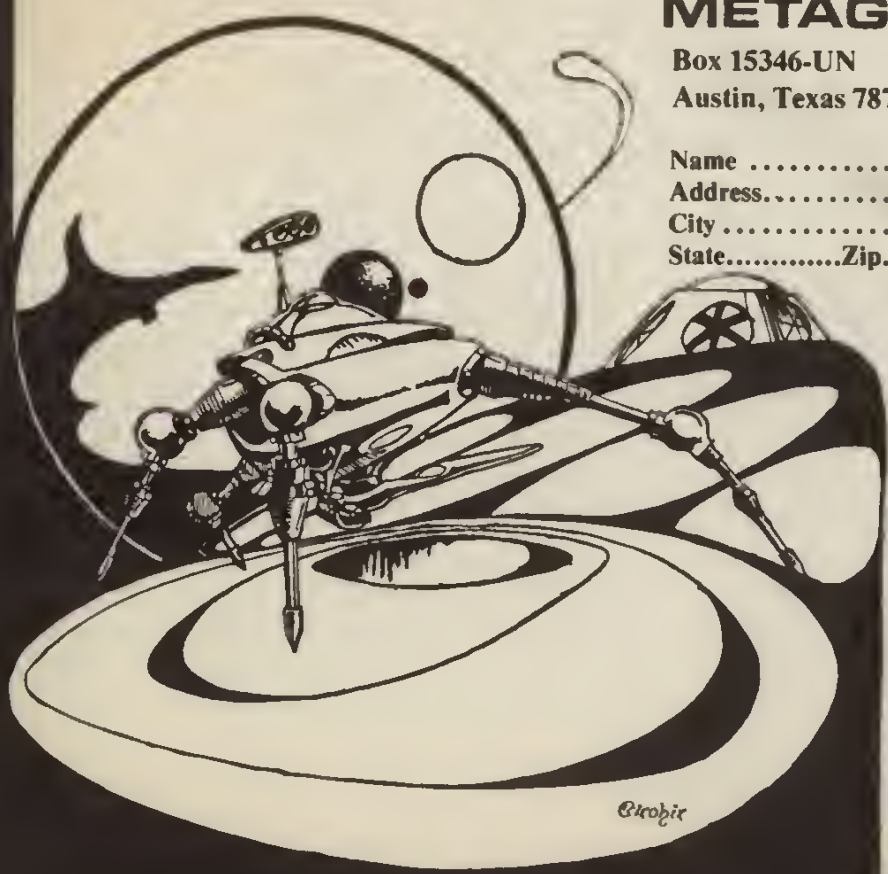

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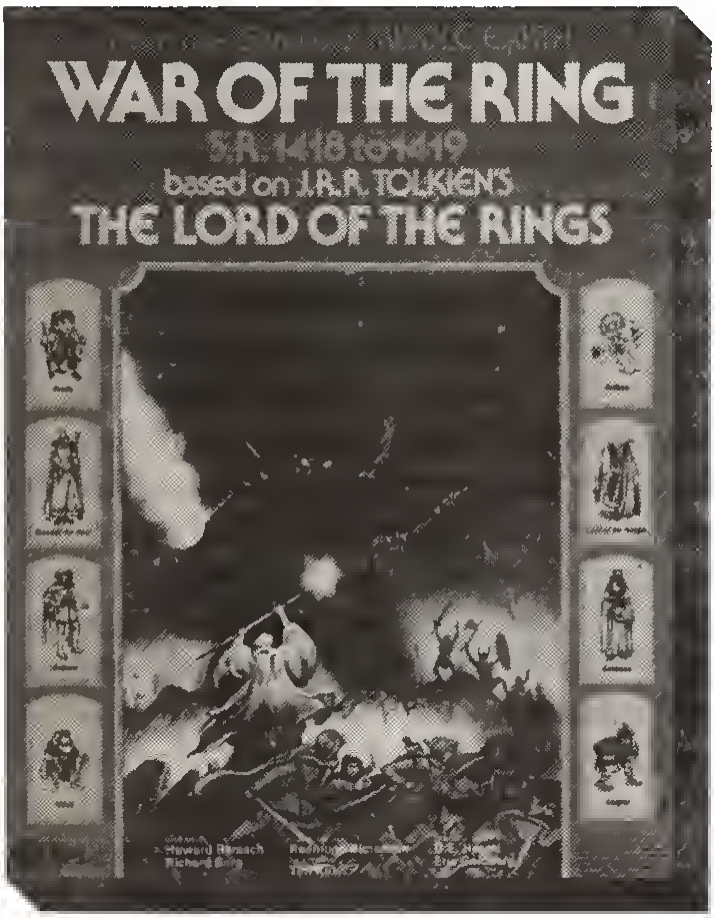

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A Statement of Ethical Position By The Worldcon Guest of Honor

Guest Editorial

Harlan Ellison

It is not enough to talk the talk; in this life we must walk the walk, as well. Otherwise we are lip-service hypocrites.

That is the basic position.

What it refers to, is not quite so simplistic. In point of fact, the situation to which that position speaks puts me — as they say — between a rock and a very hard place, indeed.

I am very much in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Arizona is one of the states that has not ratified the ERA.

I think this is a bad thing.

I think the reasons *behind* the non-ratification in Arizona are even more dangerous than that they contribute to the failure of the ERA. They are shadowy reasons that go directly to the heart of the separation of Church and State in America. Arizonians will understand what I'm saying, though non-residents may find that an obscure reference. Please forgive the awful obscurantism; I do it purposely to avoid lawsuits.

But, as I boycotted the Miami WorldCon in large part because of the Anita Bryant influence in Dade County and Florida's position on the ERA, so should I now refuse to appear in Phoenix for the same reason. By turning down the accolade of being the 1978 WorldCon's Guest of Honor —

something that caps my 25 years as fan and professional in the field — I would cause myself great unhappiness ... but I'd be able to look in the mirror without flinching, and would be able to continue to think of myself as an honorable person. That was to have been my course of action.

But there are considerations that make such a decision extremely difficult. First, I accepted the Guest of Honorship several years before NOW and the pro-ERA forces began their economic boycotts of states where ratification had been withheld. I accepted in good faith, and to weasel out today would be unethical in *that* respect. Second, though this is something in which *I* passionately believe, I don't think I have the right to morally blackmail the Iguanacon Committee that may *not* feel as I do, though I've been advised many of the members are in accord.

If I were to vacate the Guest of Honor slot, I would also have to take advertisements in *Locus, Galaxy, F&SF, Analog, Unearth, Galileo, Science Fiction Review* and any other platforms of mass communication available to me, such as the NBC Tomorrow Show, etcetera, where my position could be explicated. I would have to urge those who might be coming to Phoenix in part because I would be there, to stay away ... not to bring money into Arizona ... to show the state legislature that there is an economic club that would be used against *any* state that fails to offer women equal rights.

I would do that, at my own expense. It would be the logical extension of my decision.

But there is no way of ignoring the ugly reality that such actions would very likely damage the WorldCon, as well as the good and decent fans who have worked so long and hard to put the Iguanacon together. It would certainly cost them financially. They cannot get out of the contract with the convention hotel, they cannot move the convention to another state, and I would thus be bludgeoning innocent people with *my* ethical imperatives.

I would be playing with their lives.

Which would be unconscionably immoral.

Rock. Very hard place.

When I thought all this out, I went to wiser heads for guidance. They have given it freely. Ursula LeGuin. Joanna Russ, Greg Brown who is head of the Iguanacon Committee, Vonda McIntyre, Marion Zimmer Bradley and Susan Wood have suggested alternatives to the extreme position. One of these alternatives seems both salutary and directly in service of the commonweal.

It is this:

I will come to the Convention as Guest of Honor, but I will do it in the spirit of making the Convention a platform for heightening the awareness of fans and Arizona as a whole to the situation. I will do this because I feel I must, but in a way that will minimize any crippling of the convention.

I will coordinate with the National Organization for Women (NOW), the pro-ERA elements in Arizona, and the convention committee itself, of course. I will take every possible public relations and promotional opportunity to publicise the situation. I have been assured by the Executive Committee of the Iguanacon that there will be time for publicity and dis-

cussion of this most urgent problem, that there will be no sexist entertainment at the convention, and that Phoenix and the state will be apprised of the economic imperatives that obtain.

In this way, I will attempt to make the best of an untenable moral situation. I urge others to assist me in this. I suppose in some ways I'm trying to have my cake of conscience and eat it, too; but dammit, I can't think of any other way out of this bind in which my beliefs have put me, without hurting innocent people.

As for those who will begin the barrage of flak, and I expect no less for assuming such a position, may I just remind them that there is recent precedent for utilizing a WorldCon for moral ends: Bob Heinlein believes passionately in the drive to obtain blood, and the conventions have been used as platforms to publicize that drive. What Bob has done is use himself as a loss-leader; I am doing the same. I'm uncomfortable leading *anybody*'s parade, but I find myself in the barrel and *not* to do it would be cowardly. I can stand the flak, and the more the better, because it only serves to raise into higher profile the basic problem.

As for those who share my belief that the ERA is a vitally important issue and must not be allowed to be killed by intransigence or by reactionary religious elements in the Arizona state legislature, I suggest fans coming to the convention figure out ways to withhold money from the state as much as possible. The Convention Committee should assemble a list of acceptable campsites for those fans who prefer to stay elsewhere than in the convention hotel. I will be one of those people. You are invited to stop by my tent, wherever it might be. But more: bring your own food. Set up feeding arrangements wth local fans. Don't shop in the stores. Spend your money with the out-of-state dealers in the huckster rooms, but stay away from the tourist facilities. None of this is easy, but who ever said that taking a moral stand was going to be pleasurable?

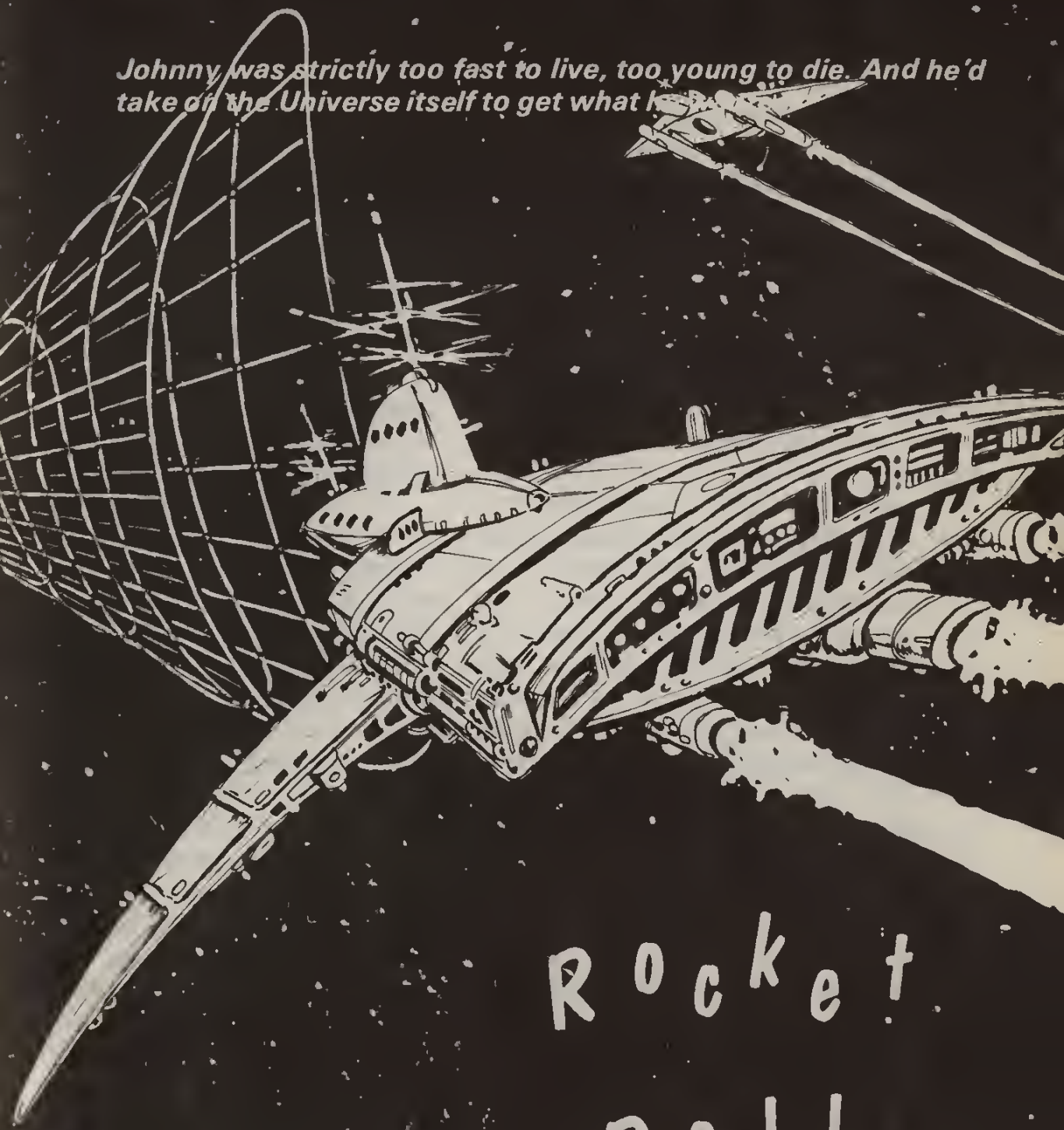
In short, let's *just for once,* in the world of sf, walk the walk, and not just talk the talk. For decades sf has trumpeted about Brave New Worlds and what Slanlike futuristic thinkers we are, how humanistic sf is, how socially conscious we are, how sf stories can deal with delicate social issues that mimetic fiction is afraid to talk about. And yet, on the whole, sf fans and pros live in Never-Never Land when it comes to taking part in the pragmatic world around them; they would rather escape into a realm of creative anachronisms than go to the battlements to fight the real wars; to be precise, sf fans and professionals tend to be terribly provincial about the pressing issues of our times, to turn their heads and say it is none of their affair.

Dealing with far-flung galactic civilizations is great fun, but we're supposed to be *concerned* people. And so ... at what point do we put our bodies on the line for the things sf says are important: freedom, equality, living at one with our planet, free speech, intellectual awareness, courage, the best possible condition of life for people?

Can we continue to deal with sf as merely escapist fiction, pointless, mindless entertainment, no nobler

(cont. on pg. 46)

Johnny was strictly too fast to live, too young to die. And he'd take on the Universe itself to get what h[illegible]



Rocket Roll

by Craig Shaw Gardner

1

He was the rocket punk. That's what they called him, those who knew him well. He was the rocket punk, and it was time to move again.

"Johnny," Betsy Erde said. "Johnny," she said, moving close to him. She chewed on a strand of her dirty blonde hair. "Johnny, stay with me."

He was the rocket punk. The punk who had crossed the League of Habitable Worlds five times. The punk who had stolen the fabulous Eye of Diamondus, and was the only human survivor of the Diamondan Massacre.

Her hands brushed his sandy hair, slipped across his silver jumpsuit. Her firm, stand-out breasts brushed down against his cheek, then his chest. Her mouth slid into his, and he was led into the wet, gaping warmth, an introduction to the dance of tongues.

He was the rocket punk. The punk who was one of the six original mutineers on *Mary's Hope,* and the one who managed to land the ship on Murphy's Moon.The punk who was involved in that business on Tarachye, although he doesn't like to talk about that one.

"Johnny."

"Hey, babe," he said, smiling. The rough hands which had fought against a dozen G's stroked her hair. He had been around women since he had been as young as her, and he knew what to do. "Hey, babe," he said softly, but he was watching the door that led toward the pads.

He was the rocket punk. It was time to rocket.

He freed himself gently from her prison of arms. One more time, he told her. He had to go out one more time, and spend an hour in the space between the stars. She sat there sniffling and trying to understand. He told her he'd be back.

And you'll be a hundred years old, is what he didn't say.

He was free again, scrambling back to the port and the pads, to get away from planet women and a sky that was too close.

Thoughts moved through him as fast as the mud and gravel sped underneath his feet. Gotta move. He looked for the first silver shine, the first rocket spire waiting at the pads. Gotta feel the engine, pulsing. Can't let the planet ladies . . . soft, yea, but set in one place. Want you to grow roots. Like a tree.

Something shone in a space between two buildings. He hurried, trying to leave Betsy behind.

Like a tree. Once in a while maybe, they give you some water. I have to go out. Gotta move.

He still loved the ladies, earthbound ladies, always left behind. Maybe, someday, he could find a

rocket woman, sleek like the ships she rode. A rocket woman, who knew about the stars.

"Hey, kid!"

He spun to face a grey uniform.

"You're getting a little bit too close to the pads, aren't you?" The officer reached towards the punk. At the moment, his gun was still in his holster. "You have any identification?"

Oh, quark. He'd been so busy getting rid of planet women, he'd actually let himself get spotted by the Pad Law.

The punk took in as much of the surroundings as he could without looking away from the law. They were standing in the scrapyards, those circles of rusting metal and other junk that seemed to grow around a hundred different pads on a hundred different planets. If you had any sense at all, you could creep through these places without anybody suspecting so much as a breeze had gone by.

"Yea, sure," the punk said, smiling and looking for his chance. He reached with a slow, no-bad-intentions hand inside his tattered jacket.

"Quark!" he said, bending his head down to look at an inside pocket. "What could have happened...." He dropped to one knee and pushed himself with the other leg into a half flip, half somersault past the law. One of his boots hit the law's arm as he reached for his gun. The punk landed on all fours, darting into a hole in a corroding metal hull.

The law's cries echoed after him as he ran through the gutted metal ship. But then he was out the other side. He jumped over blackened plates, circled around a pile too decomposed to guess its original form. He ran on through twisted metal that reached for a sky it would never visit again.

He was free and gone. Close to the pads, close to going out. Out to where the law never reached.

Space was too big, too overwhelming for there to be any real law between the stars. Every ship was its own master, each a separate fortress against the deep. But the men who ran the planets couldn't admit that the rockets were beyond their control. They guarded the ports and tried to bog the rockets under a hundred local laws and petty regulations, but, sooner or later, the rockets would take off and leave the mud and the laws behind.

Just like the punk was going to. The scrapyard was thinning out, giving way to a flat plane broken by lines of low-lying concrete buildings and a half a dozen silver spires; the ships.

He slipped through the fence surrounding the area like it wasn't even there, running down to the pads.

He had to find out who was taking on crew. He walked past lines of men showing their papers

to equally long lines of officials, making sure everything was in order before anyone was allowed off planet. The punk didn't have any papers. But, then again, he wasn't as fussy as most. There weren't many who wanted to go out just to go.

"Hey, punk!"

Johnny stiffened. If they caught him here, there was no place to run.

A hand hit his shoulder. "What's a matter?" A face grinned into his. The grin was short a couple teeth. "You in trouble again?"

"When ain't I?" The punk chopped back at the other man's shoulder. Frank DeVoe, but everyone called him Sunside, since he never stopped smiling. The way he drank, the punk was surprised he was still alive.

"A wanted man, eh Punk?"

"Not anywhere it counts. You know anywhere I can ship out?"

"Going out again, huh? Kid, you got a real choice this time." Sunside waved towards the line of ships. "Two of 'em are in for repair. Won't go nowhere for a while. And that third one there isn't going any place again. Ever." He cackled. "Seems the whole crew blacked out somewhere as they were coming into entry orbit. They woke up, the cargo was gone."

"Pirated?"

"Just *visited* by the Free Men of Space. Seems somebody up there has some new ideas. Anyways, the people who backed the flight are stripping the ship."

"They're taking her apart?" There was a cold feeling in the punk's stomach.

"Yep." Sunside coughed for a while, a bit louder, a bit longer than the last time they had shipped together. "Claim it's their right."

Mudballers! The punk couldn't wait to get out. "So what else is going?"

"Now we're getting to the good ones." He pointed to the tallest ship on the pads, a craft with such tremendous girth that it managed to look squat despite its immensity. As if the construction of the ship wasn't enough, the craft also bore characteristic blue and white stripes on its side.

"Nutian?"

"You're learning. Knew there had to be some reason you're still alive. 'Course, I'm sure there's a berth or two free. The Nutians don't feed the ship slaves too much. Cuts down on overhead, lets them carry more. And what's a dead slave or two?"

The punk shuddered. He nodded towards the next craft.

"Captain Scragg," was Sunside's reply.

"Scragg?" Space scuttle had it that if any crew member were so unfortunate as to have a disagreement with Scragg in space, that member got a free walk in space without a suit. Once, Scragg had

left Deadfall with a crew of five. He had reached Substation #9 all alone. And in no mood to talk.

"Scragg?" Betsy Erde was sounding better all the time.

"Are you riding?" he asked the oldtimer.

"Nothing but. I'm still on the *Niagara Dream.*" Sunside nodded to the end of the line.

There she stood, if the way her crumpled hulk leaned could be called standing. *The Niagara Dream.* The punk was surprised he hadn't seen it right off. Maybe his eyes were trying to tell him something.

He had ridden out on the *Niagara Dream* once. Just once. It was almost enough to make him give up the rocket life for good. He didn't even look at the pads for close to three Earth-months after that one.

And there she was again. She seemed to have deteriorated as much as Sunside had since he had last seen them together. The punk looked wistfully back at the two ships docked for repair. Repair. The captain of the *Niagara Dream* had never heard the word. And he was supposed to ship out on that?

Sunside nudged him. "I can get you on."

The rocket punk hunched his shoulders against the sky. He slowly surveyed the half dozen ships, the low bunkers, the fence and scrapyard beyond. He thought of Betsy Erde.

"I'm coming."

He followed Sunside to the *Niagara Dream.* A rocket punk could not always afford to be choosy.

2

Both of them waited at a long grey table in the middle of a large grey room. One of them was mostly human.

"Keep your distance!" Scragg's metal hand clattered on the tabletop. The blue and white ameboid flowed to the opposite corner of the conference table.

"Gentlemen." A man stood in the door, covered in grey from head to foot. His voice held no inflection. "We must work together. It is the only way our plans will succeed."

"With a Nutian?" Scragg's good hand tugged at his beard. "When I agreed to this, you didn't tell me I'd be working with Nutians!"

A bubble rose on the ameboid's flat surface. Its edges opened and closed as the creature passed up gases from its interior, allowing the Nutian to speak, after a fashion.

"I assure you, Captain," it said. "It ish not alwaysh a pleasure to work with humansh, either."

Scragg stared hard at the sentient fungus, but said nothing.

"Good," the grey man said.

"I'm sure we can reach an understanding. Remember, it is to your advantage."

"Ash we agreed?"

"As I, acting as emissary for the combined governments of Faraway, have offered to both of you." The grey man took a seat between the two of them. "I have complete instructions for each of you." He handed Scragg a large grey envelope, then rolled a small grey marble towards the Nutian. "I will brief you now. Specific details are in these. Open them later."

Scragg folded the envelope into one of the many pockets on his bright green coat, while the Nutian eveloped the marble within a fuzzy blue pseudopod.

The grey man raised his hand and the surrounding walls were covered with myriad points of light. "Briefly," he said, "we have need of your skills for maneuvering in deep space." He nodded at Scragg. "One light, fast, needlecraft, run by someone who knows how to get in and out of trouble." Scragg's eyes were pulled to the wall behind the official, where a silver needlecraft, much like his own *Demon Lover,* danced between the stars.

The grey man nodded to the Nutian. "And a fully armed battle cruiser." A squat Nutian battleship appeared on another wall, light weapons slicing through the vacuum.

"Just the thing to corner the Free Men of Space." The grey man gestured to the third wall, where three ships flew. Scragg recognized them. They stood in the spaceyard near his own, two ready for repair, the other supposedly about to be scrapped. "Once you have done your part, our ships will take over. Three ships, gentlemen, full of crack Faraway troops. Three ships ready to show the so-called Free Men what it means to flaunt the authority of Faraway."

The scenes on the walls behind the grey man had changed. Now small, hairy sub-humans were being systematically slaughtered by tall men dressed in grey. The uniformed men did their work casually, decapitating and maiming in silent grace, as their foe, male, female, young and old, screamed soundlessly in their death agonies.

"This, gentlemen," the grey man continued with the same lack of tone, "is what happens to those who do not recognize their rightful rulers."

"Very nice, Faraway," Scragg said as he adjusted a ruffled sleeve with his metal hand. "But how do we find these Free Men? Space has always struck me as a rather large place to look for tiny little ships!"

"Quite simple. They'll be waiting for you. Or the bait ship, rather. The Free Men like to prey on ships from Faraway Ports. Especially ships carrying valuable cargo, like the *Niagara Dream.*"

A battered hulk appeared on the

wall where the *Demon Lover* had flown.

"That pile of space debris?" Scragg snorted. "I'm amazed every time it makes orbit velocity!"

"Exactly." The official waved his hand and the ship imploded, crumbling into itself. "The one ship on Faraway good for nothing, except to be a victim."

The crumpled mass of metal became translucent. Edges became planes, facets. It gleamed.

"The Eye of Diamondus!"

"The cargo of which I spoke."

"But I was promised —"

"Exactly. Who can tell what happens during a space battle? Things are lost. Even something as valuable as the Eye."

Scragg smashed his silver hand down on the grey table. "That's a bargain, then!"

The Nutian slithered towards the others. "And the Free Men?"

"They are yours, as agreed. We keep the ringleaders, kill a few to give our soldiers sport. The rest—"

Shlavesh!" the Nutian bubbled. "Good, good shlavesh!" It swirled around the table in ever-widening circles.

"Keep away from me!" Scragg cried. He pressed a button on his artificial wrist, and his metal hand grew claws. "I will not be touched by a fungus!"

"Shlavesh!" the Nutian burbled from four different voice bubbles. "Shlavesh! All, all shlavesh! The greatesht Nutian of them all! A hundred shlavesh! A thoushand shlavesh!"

"Back! Back I say!"

The man in grey turned away from the conference table. "Yes, gentlemen, I think we have made a most satisfactory arrangement."

3

The punk followed Sunside into the lock of the *Niagara Dream*. The outer door closed behind them in three grinding jerks. The punk ignored it. The ship was getting him out.

One swift kick by Sunside, and the inner door opened right away.

"Eh?" It was Flint, owner/captain of the *Dream*, and last of the great "independent businessmen of space." Or so he called himself. He looked about the same as the punk remembered him, his uniform as full of patches as his ship. "Waste," like "repair," "salary," "style" and "extras" were not in Flint's vocabulary.

Flint did recognize one word: profit. Although the cosmos knew what he did with it. The punk waited for the day when the ship would burst at the seams and out would pour the currencies of the entire League of Habitable Worlds.

"Back so soon, DeVoe?" Flint was bent over a chart-board made obsolete by half-a-dozen computer models he claimed he couldn't afford to install. He didn't look

up. "Find someone to crew? Told him no pay, just passage?"

"Cap'n." Sunside smiled. "We got the kid again!"

"Eh?" Flint looked up, squinting through the inadequate illumination. "So we do. Good. Save training time." He turned back to the control board and began to check the dials. "We leave in ten minutes. Better get secure."

"Crew quarters are where we left 'em," Sunside said as he jerked open the hatch. The punk followed him down. This is getting me out, he said to himself. This is getting me out.

"Quark!" the punk said out loud.

Sunside glanced up. "Wassat? Oh, slipped on the loose plating." He offered the punk a hand. "Thought you remembered that from last time."

The punk picked himself up and strapped himself down on a bunk.

At the first engine rumble, all his problems were forgotten.

Gotta move.

"This trip isn't going to be so bad," Sunside said.

Going out.

"Flint's got himself a real cargo this time."

Out to the stars.

"Something you've seen before." Sunside popped open his bunk cabinet and pulled out a bundle of rags.

Gotta move.

He shook the bundle. Something hard and shiny fell out.

Going out.

"Here, kid. It's the Eye."

Out to the — what?

It was the gem. The one the punk had stolen, and almost gotten killed over. He had lost it in the end. Just as glad, too. The thing was supposed to be powerful. It ended up being too much of a responsibility.

Here it was again. The punk looked sharply at Sunside.

"What am I doing with it? Well, Flint had it locked up." Sunside's smile got even broader. "Wasn't much of a lock, though. Quark, even I could get into it. So, I figured it would be safer down here. Never know what might happen with a stone like this."

The ship shook.

"Well, kid, here we go."

The ship quivered. The ship shuddered. The ship groaned.

The punk had forgotten what an ordeal it was for the *Niagara Dream* to escape the grip of gravity. He knew he'd remember all of it, very soon.

He was getting out. That's what he should think about. Away from mud, away from rules, away from borders and boundaries and men running the lives of other men. Out to where you could run free and forever.

The pressure increased as the planet showed its reluctance to let them leave. The punk closed his eyes. Soon they'd be beyond all

this.

The ship lurched.

Eyes snapped open. Something was wrong. The ship jerked. Twice.

Madman Flint had cut one too many corners. The *Dream* wasn't going to make it out.

The pressure increased. Were they falling? The sensation was new to the punk. To die, squashed on a ball of mud!

He lost consciousness before he ran out of curses.

4

The first thought in his head was "The punk is still alive." The second thought was that there was a woman staring down at him.

"All right," she said. "Haul yourself out of there."

He was still in his bunk, but the straps had been taken off. He sat up. Pain slammed in his head. The woman helped him to his feet.

Actually, she was more of a girl. Or sort of in-between. Close to his age, he'd guess. Quite nice looking, too. A red-head. A little skinny, maybe, but she'd do until something better came along. Put him in mind for some recreation. If only his head....

"It'll stop in a moment," the girl said. "Just some after-effects. It's easier to reel you in if we black you out first."

"In?" the punk said. "Where?"

"Oh, sorry. Rude of me. Welcome to the Free People of Space."

The punk turned to get the first look at his surroundings. The *Dream,* or what was left of it, was scattered across the floor of a large domed room. Part of a luxury cruiser, the punk guessed.

The girl led him over to Flint and Sunside, who stood silently between four very large Free People. It was the first time he had seen Sunside without a smile.

Flint muttered something about "unfair to small business."

The girl walked up to Sunside. "How'd you like to open your mouth?"

Sunside backed away.

She motioned to one of the very large Free People. "Pat our friend on the back, would you please?"

The very large Free Person did as he was told. The Eye of Diamondus popped into the girl's hand.

"A bit wet," she said, wiping the gem on her tunic, "but we'll take it." She dropped it into a pocket.

"What?" Flint cried. "That's cargo from Faraway! What business have you depriving an honest tradesman —"

Another large crewperson lumbered towards Flint. Flint stopped talking. Sunside shrugged and smiled.

The punk missed all this. He was watching the girl. Here, at last, was a woman to his liking.

She turned and began to walk across the mammoth room. The crew of the former *Niagara Dream,* urged on by the same four large Free People, followed.

"I understand that the Eye was once supposed to be the power source behind a formidable weapon," the girl said. "That's only rumor, of course."

Rumor. The punk shook his head, which brought back the pain. Rumor made him steal that stone in the first place. It had also caused a tidy massacre, shortly thereafter.

It's too bad," the girl continued, "because we could certainly use that power now."

The punk had heard enough. It was time to make a move. He stretched and spoke. "Babe, everybody needs the Eye."

The girl half smiled at that. " 'What they all say,' huh?" Her hand went up in the air. " 'But our cause is just! Etc., etc., blah, blah, blah!' " Her hand came down and she shrugged. "Fair enough. Except for two problems."

She stopped and turned back to her audience. "One: We've learned that your ship was bait — those fools on Faraway used it to track us down. They'll be arriving here shortly."

The punk stared at her through half-closed eyelids. A suggestion of a smile curled his lips. That usually got them.

She didn't seem to notice. She kept on talking. "Two: The sonics we used to black you out had an unfortunate side effect. We normally let our victims go once we've fleeced them." She pointed to the debris-littered floor. "In your case, that obviously isn't possible. Your ship no longer exists. So when Faraway attacks us, they attack you."

She smiled sweetly.

The girl looked at the crew of the *Dream.* "We still have some time before the Faraway forces get here. I think you three can be useful." She motioned to the Free People. "Take two of these three with you and show them how to use the aft guns. The other one should come with me."

The punk was faster and sneakier than either Flint or Sunside. He got to go with the girl.

"Figured it would be you," she said. "We have to go up front."

"I wouldn't want it any other way," the punk replied. He smiled.

The girl kept on walking. "What's your name? Johnny?"

The punk started, then nodded. How could she know? Sunside or Flint must have told her.

"Good. Mine's Joanna. I'm going to show you the forward weapons system. We'll have to hurry about it, too. There may not be much time."

At that, the punk smiled again. He'd be alone with this young woman. Any time at all was enough time for the rocket punk.

Joanna glanced at him. "No time for that, either. I hope you won't be difficult."

The punk frowned. Was he being that obvious?

He let Joanna walk a bit ahead. This one was going to be a little more difficult than those planet girls he was used to. Still, he was beginning to think she was worth it. He was getting used to the way she talked. And from here, her walk didn't look so bad either.

The rocket punk was up to the challenge.

5

"Mudballers!" Scragg cried. "Captain?" a rather short man said in a rather subdued voice.

"This!" He waved a grey piece of paper in his human hand. "Who do these Faraways think I am?"

"Captain?" the little man said. He seemed to grow smaller with every word.

"They want me, the *Demon Lover,* to chart a course perilously close to the rebel stronghold. I'm to draw the rebels out, so that the Nutian battleship can make a sudden appearance and destroy their small fighting craft. What do you think of that, Simpson?"

"Captain?"

"Aye, I feel the same. The plans are about as solid as a space-eel. And I trust them as much, too! That Nutian vessel has no love for us. What's to prevent it from blasting us along with the rebels?"

"Captain?"

"Exactly!" Scragg's metal hand ripped through the grey sheet. "We'll fly to the rebel base, but in our own way. Who knows?" The metal hand closed on the grey fragment. "We may be able to fry a Nutian ship as well!"

6

They ran through corridor after endless corridor. This was, by far, the largest luxury liner the punk had ever seen.

He caught up with Joanna again. He was almost out of breath.

"Hey, babe," he said as softly as his labored breathing would allow. "What's the rush?"

"If we are not battle ready in a matter of minutes," the girl said, not bothering to look at him, "gaping holes will be blown in the station, the walls will be melted down around us, and we will be burned to cinders."

"Yea," the punk said. "But besides that?" He shrugged. "I think we're going too fast. Why don't we stop and rest a minute?"

"Johnny," Joanna said, actually allowing one green eye to scorn-

fully glance at him. "There is no 'besides that'! As for going too fast, I think we're moving just fine. I'm in no mood to slow down and get involved in what you're thinking about!"

What? How did she know what he was thinking?

As soon as the doubt hit him, the punk pushed it away. He smiled in Joanna's direction. The rocket punk was always calm, and always ready. That's why the ladies loved him so.

There had to be a way through to this one. It might call for a little extra effort, but the punk was ready. Maybe he could use one of her friends, or butter up her family just the right way.

He ran into somebody.

"Young man!" said the voice of a woman used to authority. "What do you think you are doing?"

"Johnny," Joanna said. "I'd like you to meet my mother."

"Who is this?" the woman demanded, not so much in her tone of voice as the way she clipped her words. Johnny pushed himself off the floor and looked at the woman he had bounced off of. She was taller than Joanna. Her hair was the red of her daughter's, save that hers was streaked with grey, a color shared by her eyes, two relentless orbs that stared at the punk.

"He's one of the three men we just picked up, mother. I'm taking him forward to teach him the system."

"Space trash," the mother said.

"We have to go now, mother." Joanna waved to the punk. "Mother's the main authority on this station. At least, she's as much of an authority as the Free People have."

The punk walked in a wide circle around Joanna's mother. He followed the girl out of the room.

"Don't let him get too close to you, dear!" Mother called after them.

"Mother, please!" Joanna called back, a hint of anger in her voice. "I know what he's thinking!"

"Don't worry!" Mother shouted. "We'll get rid of him just as soon as we can!"

There was more, but a bend in the ship's never-ending hallway made her mother's voice indistinct, and soon it was lost altogether.

It was replaced by a very low hum.

"We're coming up to the main system," Joanna explained. The endless corridor had widened. Polished silver machinery lined both walls. Some of it looked like computers on the boats the punk had shipped out on. Some of it looked like nothing he had ever seen before.

"This place was once a war station for one of the nations of Faraway," she continued. "That's when they still had nations. But soon after it was completed, the Agreements of Union were signed, and this place was stripped and

abandoned."

They passed through a large, open doorway into an even larger room, filled with a half dozen rows of consoles. There were perhaps 50 or 60 different control boards here, each unique in size and shape. The machines were surrounded by darting figures, most of them human, some mechanical, a few as strange as the devices they tended.

"So," Joanna continued, "we had to put it all back together again. This is the main control room. We've taken equipment from a hundred ships to get this place working again. In a few cases, some of the crew stayed behind, too. But we've developed a station capable of sustaining itself. Defending itself, too. The firepower encased in this metal," she gestured around the room, "combined with certain abilities we have recently developed, makes us impregnable. Or so we hope."

The punk whistled. Even he was impressed. He'd seen one or two of the boards before. The rest were totally new to him. He glanced back at the girl. "So what am I here for?"

"You're a pair of hands. And we need everyone we can get." She gestured at a row of boards. "Think you can learn to run one of these?"

He smiled at that. "Babe, I'm the rocket punk. Give me five minutes, and I can run anything in this flying junkyard."

Joanna smiled back. "Almost anything." She yelled across the room. "Hey, Frank! Think you can show our friend here how to run the Link?"

A stocky fellow with thinning hair looked up from a distant board and waved. He jogged across the room, expertly dodging the scattered apparatus.

The punk looked back at Joanna. The smile was on his face to stay, and the gleam that had won him hearts on a dozen worlds was in his eyes. "Hey, babe," he said. "There's more than enough people here. Why did you really want me to come with you?"

"Like I said, you're a pair of hands. Just about anybody can run one of these things, and you've had enough experience to pick the operations up easily. So, we put you behind one of these consoles and free somebody who can use his mind."

The punk dug his hands into the pockets of his dirty silver jumpsuit and looked at the floor. Was this girl playing with him? If this was how rocket women worked, maybe he'd go back to planet ladies after all.

"What do you mean," he muttered, "use his mind?"

"Like we all do, here at Free People Station." She stared at him. "I'm sorry. I thought it was obvious, but I guess there was no way a newcomer like you would know."

The punk pulled his gangly form

erect. He was ready for any challenge.

"What's that?"

"You think you're ready for any challenge," the girl said.

"Huh?" the punk replied.

"And you're thinking less of me now and more kindly towards the planet women."

"What?" The punk took a step back.

"Johnny, I can read your mind."

"What? how?" The punk looked around him. What was that woman saying? How could she read his mind?

He felt like covering his head.

Joanna laid a reassuring hand on Johnny's shoulder. The punk looked at it suspiciously.

"Hey, Johnny," she said. "It's not so bad. It's just something we do up here."

The punk glanced at her dark green eyes, then away. He was trying not to think.

"We try to live differently here," she continued. "More open to ourselves. And we discovered this talent — an ability to really use our minds."

She looked around the room. "Most of us have it. Some more, some less. Some of us can lift things with our thoughts, others can send and receive. Some, like me, can just read minds. I'm very hazy on it, too. I must admit, you're the first person whose every thought was open to me."

Johnny was horrified.

"Are you ready for me yet?" It was Frank. He was standing a little to one side, just outside the punk's vision. How long had he been there?

"Just a second," Joanna said. She spoke to Johnny again. "Who knows why this talent developed? Perhaps it's that we're no longer planet bound. Things are more free out here; perhaps it's our open culture. Perhaps it's just a state of mind."

Frank glanced at the punk. "Your friend here doesn't seem like the talkative type."

Joanna shook her head. "He's had a few too many shocks today. Show him around before you teach him to use the Link. I think it'll cheer him up."

"If you say so." Frank waved at the punk. "C'mon, Loquacious. I'll give you the guided tour."

The punk numbly followed.

7

The man walked down the blue and white corridor. He was naked, except for a thick blue cape he wore across his head and shoulders. He walked slowly and stooped forward slightly, as if he carried a great weight.

"Turn here," the cape said.

"Yes, your benevolence," the man replied.

"To the end of the hall. The obshervation port!"

The man obeyed.

"Fashter! Or would you like your flesh to feed the Nutian newborn?"

The man took a couple quick steps, then resumed his unhurried pace.

"Humansh!" the fungus exclaimed as they entered the room with the large portal looking out to space. "You'd think they had shome higher calling than to sherve their Nutian mashters!"

"Yes, your benevolence."

"Don't be clever, human! You can eashily be replached! If my psheudopodsh were not sho ushed to the curve of your back...."

A light moved this side of the stars.

"Ah, that will be the Captain. Humansh! The foolsh on Faraway offered ush a plan. We are to take the rebel shtronghold, and keep the humansh as slavesh. Shlavesh!" A pseudopod danced above the human's head.

"But Captain Shcragg will get there firsht. Foolsh! Shcragg hatesh Nutiansh! How do I know he will not kill all the rebelsh? Then I will get no shlavesh! No shlavesh at all!" The ameboid flopped back and forth, almost causing the man underneath to lose his balance.

"No! We will meet Captain Shcragg before he shees a single rebel! Then, all, all will be oursh! All, all shlavesh! Shlavesh!"

"Yes, yes benevolence!"

"Yesh. Yesh. Shlavesh. And one shlave for me alone. Captain Shcragg! Shlave Shcragg!" The Nutian stroked the human's arm with a fuzzy blue and white extension. "Do you know what that meansh?"

"Benevolence?"

"I will no longer need you! I will shet you free!"

"Free?" the man said after a moment's hesitation.

"Free."

"Free!" The man stood erect, almost knocking his passenger to the ground.

"Shlave! Don't be too cheerful, or I will be forched to cover your fache!"

"Yes, your benevolence." The man stooped again.

The Nutian turned his attention back to the portal and the distant ship. "Ah, Captain Shcragg," it mused. "I wonder how well my psheudopodsh will fit on your back!"

8

Frank took the rocket punk around to present the machines of the Free People. Machines that kept the station going with air, energy, gravity. Machines that protected the station from the rigors of space. Thinking machines, and

not-so-thinking machines. Machines that were offensive, but only in the very best ways.

"And here, kid, is the control board for a Warledden gun, emitting a sonic wave which wreaks havoc on atomic motion. Whatever it touches, it freezes."

Yes, there were weapons. Immense world crumblers stood next to small and subtle disruptors with delicate control panels, which in turn stood next to more conventional armaments. Each had a long and famous history of death and glory.

"That was used to create part of the Deadly Rings of Nocturne," Frank pointed, "and that was the little box that destroyed the Hellbent system from a dozen light-years away."

There was a crystal helmet of Zadachai, a weapon so complex that it would take a lifetime to understand. There was a Daclain sword, the deadliest of all hand-to-hand combat armaments, which was capable of turning on its user at the slightest misstep. And there was the last existing Skedgell cube, a device once thought to be hidden on Murphy's Moon.

The punk was coming out of it. He decided he was going to like it here.

"Hey," he said.

"He speaks!" Frank replied.

"How can anyone beat you?"

"They can't," Frank said. "We're the good guys." He scratched at his hairline. "Actually, most of this is just for show. We don't know how to run four out of five of these things. We never needed to. The ones we could use were more than enough to handle anything we met before. Now, we're faced with our first real threat: an invasion force from Faraway that we may be too weak to resist."

He spread his arms wide to the bustle in the room. "Do these people look like they know what they're doing? Most of them don't. They're trying to understand or gain better control over some of these monster devices, figuring that any one of them might mean the difference in our fight with Faraway."

The punk followed the dizzying ebb and flow around the room. What he had perceived as the grandeur of a supremely polished fighting force had degenerated into confusion. So much room, so much power, going to waste. It contradicted the stringent laws of conservation of space and energy, which the average space pilot remembered only slightly better than his own name.

The whole setup bothered the rocket punk.

"But, if you can't use them, why keep them?"

Frank shrugged. "A couple reasons. First, if we have them, somebody else doesn't. Second, who knows? Someday, we might find a

way to use every one of these. The Free People do not waste opportunities!"

Frank dug into a pocket of his dark blue worksuit. "We've got one more to add to our collection. But you know about this one." He pulled out the Eye.

"Yea," the punk replied. "I've seen too much of it."

"Oh, well." Frank laid the gem on a level spot on the top of a nearby console. "Think of it as one more opportunity." He turned and let the punk toward the middle of the room. "Come on. I'll show you the Link."

Frank's hand ran across the top of a particularly large and ornate contraption. "Beautiful, isn't it? This is one of the few we really know how to work — and one that gets the job done." There were two seats before the long curved board. Frank took one and motioned for the punk to take the other.

"This is the Link."

The punk looked at the rows of buttons and knobs, the great circular dials and meters. He ran his hands across the ornate scrollwork engraved on every free centimeter of the board, trying to imagine the power that the circuits held within. This is what he wanted: a feeling of control, of movement. The punk was ready to rocket again.

"This is the baby that brought you to us," Frank said. The punk looked up. "Yep. This is the machine that produced your blackouts. Converted them, to be more exact. You see, as far as we can tell, this machine has no power source of its own. It works off mental energy. Brain power, you could call it. I hear Joanna already told you all about that sort of thing."

The knobs felt cold under the punk's hands. He shivered.

"Well," Frank said, "speak of a space-eel."

It was Joanna.

"Well, Frank, what do you think?"

Frank turned towards Johnny, an eyebrow raised in appraisal. "Oh, I think the kid'll pick it up fast enough." He nodded to the punk. "You see the four globes on top? Those are helmets. They siphon the mental energy that it takes to power the machine. The Link then creates an energy field, and, well, you know what the energy field can do!" He winked.

"Now, there used to be a fifth helmet." He indicated a rack beyond the four globes. "Except that our technicians took it apart, so they could figure out to build more. We have four duplicates already manufactured, exactly like the originals in every detail. At least, in every detail we can figure out."

"Except that we haven't had time to test them," Joanna added.

"Exactly," Frank continued. "Those Faraway folk have a rotten sense of timing. Anyways, we have

eight helmets now. Coincidentally, we have eight people whose mental powers are well enough developed to use them.

"One of those people is Joanna. Another one, of course, is me. We figured we'd need all eight of us working together if we're going to snag everything Faraway is sending at us. But we've got a problem. No one knows how to run the Link except for the people who can use the helmets. When we learned about the attack, we knew we needed somebody with a bit of mechanical aptitude — someone who could pick up a strange machine fast."

He pointed at the girl. "You're Joanna's personal choice, you know."

Joanna and the punk looked at each other.

"Well," Joanna smiled, "I could tell you'd be good."

The punk didn't know whether to get angry or smile back. His eyes drifted over to the rococo console. He'd learn how to run that thing better than anyone had before. They'd be pushing more power through it. Fine. He'd take that power and throw an energy field farther than any the Link had ever thrown before. And he'd do it in half the time.

After all, he was the rocket punk.

9

Three ships flew in close formation towards the rebel stronghold.

In the central ship, the man in grey stood before two dozen other men in grey. But there was a difference. None of the two dozen wore the goggles that shone on the first grey man's face. All their eyes were plainly visible. On some, you could even see the nose and mouth. One man, sitting well back behind the others, wore no head covering at all, not to mention wearing no gloves on his hands. The rest of the group seemed not to notice he was there.

"Officers!" cried the first man in grey.

"Yessir!" came the response in chorus.

"Our plans begin. The web grows tighter around the rebel stronghold."

"Absolutely!" came the chorus.

"Soon the rebels will have no escape. We will crush their satellite like so much space debris."

"Positively!" came the response.

"Faraway will triumph."

"Faraway forever!" was the reply.

The man in grey leaned forward. "Are there any questions?"

An ungloved hand shot up in the back of the room. The man in grey raised his hand as well. Dull white

light shot from a dozen points in the room, transfixing the questioner.

The man in grey lowered his hand, and the grey light was gone. The questioner was gone as well.

"Absolutely!" came the chorus.

Thank you," the man in grey replied. "I'm glad we are all agreed."

10

"Here they come!"

The punk jumped. Already? He had mastered the basics of the Link, but the fine points were still too far away.

Joanna came running up. "Just like the reports. One small, fast ship, coming up from planetside."

Frank sat back in his chair. He ran a hand over his balding pate. "No battle cruiser?"

"No. That'll come when the first ship gets in range."

"Oh. Sure." He turned to the punk. "Well, kid, I hope you're ready, 'cause school's over as of now." Then, to Joanna: "Get everybody here in five minutes."

She nodded and sprinted away.

"I'll get the other helmets," Frank said. He pointed to a monitor above the punk's head. "You can watch the ship come in on that."

The punk looked up. At the moment, the screen showed only stars.

"Aye! There she is, Simpson!"

"Captain?"

"On the screen, there. 'Tis the rebel stronghold. A pretty point of light!" Scragg's metal hand worked a switch below the screen and the image grew larger, more detailed.

"Looks quite secure. No activity aound her yet, hey Simpson?"

"Captain?"

"Aye, I know what you're thinking. She knows of the *Demon Lover,* too! And she's watching for the best time to strike!" He laughed, the sound of stone grinding stone. "Well, we'll lead her a merry chase! Out of weapons range, but close enough to tantalize. They'll come blasting for us, and they'll find a Nutian Warship!

"Ah, but Simpson." One eye speared the diminutive crewman. "I think we'll introduce one small difference to the Faraway plan!"

"Captain?"

"According to the fools on Faraway, the Nutians would surprise the rebel forces. Instead, I think we'll have the rebels surprise the Nutian scum!

"Then we'll be free to hit the rebel station and get the Eye. And who knows?" Scragg tugged at his beard. "There just might be other booty lying about worthy of our attention!"

Scragg looked back to the rebel

station on the screen. "A battle-cruiser makes a much nicer target than the *Demon Lover,* eh, Simpson?" He laughed again.

"Captain?" Simpson replied.

The punk wiped a sweaty palm across his silver suit. His hands must not slip on the controls.

Seven people stood on the other side of the board from the punk, their heads enclosed in the globes that powered the Link. One was Joanna, another was Joanna's mother. The punk wished he could see Joanna's face right then. Her mother was fine where she was.

Frank picked up the last helmet. "Well, kid, you gonna be all right?"

The punk nodded.

"Sure you are. We're all going to be all right." Frank lifted the helmet over his head. "Good luck. To all of us." The helmet swallowed his head and eight faceless figures stood across from the punk.

Johnny turned his attention to the board. A bright dot had appeared on the edge of a circular screen in the center of the Link.

That'll be Scragg's ship, he thought. He turned eight dials, one at a time, feeding the Link eight separate mental energies.

Another light appeared at the center of the circle screen. A light that expanded as each new mental energy was fed through the Link. The light spread outward, eight delicate filaments which intercrossed again and again. A web of energy, the punk thought. The real power of Free People Station.

The punk gave a larger wheel a microscopic turn. The web extended further. Points of darkness appeared in the net of light. Another turn, and the web grew larger still.

Frank had told the punk that, powered by five human minds, the web could fill close to two-thirds of the area on the Link screen. It was assumed that the Link's builders had had the mental capacity to push the net all the way to the outer edges using only five helmets. The Free People hoped, with the addition of three new helmets, to extend their power to the limits of the Link's range.

Captain Scragg's ship had disappeared from the screen.

Where had he gone? Scragg hadn't come close enough, or stayed long enough, to "draw out the small fighting craft of the station," as Joanna's information had said he would. Of course, Scragg would not have been met by spacecraft, but by an energy net. But there was no way for Scragg to know this. Was there?

One thing the punk did know about Scragg. He wasn't going to make any hasty moves, any stupid decisions. He'd survived in space too long for that. There were reasons for what he did. Reasons that weren't in Joanna's information.

The light was on the edge of the screen again, some 120 degrees from where it first appeared. This time, it was moving toward the station.

The punk edged the energy web outward. Interlaced light reached for the bright moving dot.

C'mon Scragg, the punk urged silently. We're going to show you a trick even you don't know.

"Nothing?"

Simpson didn't say a word. It was the safest course in times like these.

"From all I've heard, I would have thought our first brief foray would have brought the rebels out in force. Apparently, the attention and lightning-swift attack of these space-scum has been exaggerated by those incompetents on Far-away. I should have known!" Scragg's hands, both flesh and metal, curled into fists. He forced the human one open and flicked a switch.

"Now hear this, you excuse for a crew! The rebels don't seem to want to play, so we're going in to drag them out! Get off your rears and on your guns, 'cause it's likely we'll have to shoot our way free!" He flicked off.

"I'm going in until they show some signs of life," he said to Simpson. "Monitor the crew. Make sure they stay awake."

Simpson did as he was told.

The Great Nutian spoke, in the manner of his kind, with a lesser for so long that its human's back began to ache. At last, the Great dismissed the other with a quick slap of pseudopods. A sure sign of anger. The Great Nutian's human watched them leave; a smaller fungus with more white and less blue, urging its female mount to the greatest possible speed her starved body could manage.

"Foolsh! Everywhere foolsh!" The Great Nutian flopped around atop the human. "The greatesht battleship of the highesht culture in the univershe! And they've losht Shcragg's ship!" A half dozen pseudopods waved in the air, smacking loudly against each other again and again. "Foolsh! They will ruin my mashter plan! I'll looshe all my lovely shlavesh! Shlavesh!"

"Yes, your benevolence," the human said softly.

The Nutian stopped quivering. Its pseudoflesh smoothed out, save for a serene ripple. "Oh, good, good shlave! You undershtand! How will I shurvive when you are gone?"

A gentle nudge of a pseudopod at the base of the human's neck caused the slave to turn around so that both he and the Nutian faced the portal again.

"Foolish ambition!" the Nutian said as he watched the stars. "But I will not resht until Shcragg ish my shlave! He must be shown Nutian shuperiority! You undershtand?"

"Yes, your benevolence."

"We will take him by shurprishe! I will need your help. We will meet him on hish ship, or in the rebel shtronghold. In the heat of battle, when he leasht expectsh it, you will shneak up behind him. With the lightning-shwift shpeed of a Nutian, I will jump from your head to hish! Shoon, my shuperior willpower will overcome hish feeble human brain, and he will be my shlave. Shlave!"

"And me, benevolence?"

"Ash I said. Do your job well, and you will have your reward. Help conquer Shcragg, I will shet you free."

"Free." The man's mouth framed the words, although he did not speak.

A blue light flashed beneath the portal. The Nutian covered it with a pseudopod.

"Free." The man's mouth framed the words, although he did not speak.

A blue light flashed beneath the portal. The Nutian covered it with a pseudopod.

"Foolsh!" The pseudopod recoiled. "Can they do nothing without me?" He tapped both of the human's shoulders simultaneously. "Come. Take the alternate controlsh. We shall plunge through shpache and take the rebel shtronghold! A Nutian victory, and a thoushand shlavesh!"

Scragg was coming! He flew in a zigzag pattern, darting in one direction, then another, but every movement brought him closer to the station. The punk knew Scragg flew that way to avoid being an easy target for enemy fire. He also knew there was no way for Scragg to avoid the net.

The energy net grew, a great expanding circle approaching Scragg's ship, like some strange mobile spider web, stalking an unsuspecting fly. The punk glanced across the board, then looked again. The eight helmets were glowing. It was not a constant light, but an illumination that varied in intensity, so that first one globe was the brightest, then the next, then the next after that. Light rippled through the eight over and over again; a rhythm of light, of power entering the Link, and the controls under the punk's hands.

Johnny caressed the wheel that stretched the net. Here was power: the power of eight human minds, eight fully active minds, their potential poured through this alien machine to create something larger than the station in which they stood. As he sat there, and felt the warm hum of the Link where he touched it with his palms and his knees, Johnny could see the power extending throughout the station. The power came from more than

just the eight who stood before him. It touched everyone in the rebel base, and everyone gave a part of himself or herself, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps not, to the energy force of the Link. A force that protected. A force that made the lives of Free People Station possible.

The power was in every corner of the rebel base. It was even in him.

He watched the screen. Come to me, he thought to the futilely darting spot of light that represented Scragg's ship.

The energy ring reached for the *Demon Lover.* Had the punk moved the wheel, or had he wished the circle outward? No matter. The web touched the point of light.

"Captain?"

"What's happening? Help me on these controls, Simpson, if you value your life!"

Simpson was there before Scragg had finished the sentence.

"Still no ships. They've got something else, Simpson. Something that Faraway doesn't even know about."

Silence.

"Simpson? What's the matter with you, man?" Scragg's metal hand grabbed for his crewman. Simpson groaned and fell to the floor.

Scragg flicked the intercom. "Ahoy! This is the Captain! Respond!" Silence. "Where are you? Answer me!" Silence.

Scragg slammed off the intercom. "No! I will not be taken like this!" He smashed his metal hand against the control panel in front of him, putting dents to match his knuckles in the steel surface. "There's other booty to be had besides the Eye of Diamondus!" He'd have to get this ship out of here by himself — if he could ignore the darkness creeping through his brain.

The punk couldn't believe it. Scragg's ship was leaving the net.

No! He wouldn't let it go. The punk twisted knobs, clicked switches, and turned the wheel again. The light that had passed from helmet to helmet raced across the opaque globes — and the net went out, chasing Scragg to the edge of the screen.

Wait! There was another bright light, coming in from the screen's opposite side. A brighter, larger light. It had to be the Nutian battleship.

Two flies, the punk thought. Two flies for the rebel web. The punk extended the net. There, it almost caught the edge of Scragg's fleeing ship. Now, farther than it had ever gone before. Out to the edge.

Scragg's ship was still moving. The punk had to get it before Scragg could warn the Nutian slaver. He turned the wheel. Dials

reached their limits. The hum of the Link turned to a vibration.

Scragg's ship was his again. And this time it had stopped moving.

The Nutian battleship had entered the field.

"Shlave?"

"Yes — your...."

"Shlave?"

"Benev— ...."

"Shomething ish wrong! Quick, I'll protect you! Let me cover your fache!"

The human fell to the floor. The Great Nutian was thrown flopping against the portal.

The fungus oozed over the controls. "Humansh! They try to shteal my shlave! I'll ram my battleship in the middle of their rebel bashe! No one can battle the Great Nutian and not loshe hish freedom! Shlavesh!"

The Nutian battlecruiser plunged onwards to the rebel base.

The punk yelled. Both Scragg and the Nutians were in his net. He turned the wheel to shrink the web and bring them in.

The globes no longer flashed before him. They were eight constant lights, small pulsing suns.

The punk turned the wheel again. The net retracted with its ships.

That was odd. The Nutian battleship was moving faster than the net.

The punk looked up. The globes still glowed. Shouldn't they be flashing by now?

The vibration in the Link got worse, grumbling under the punk. What was happening?

The floor shook underneath him. It reminded him of the jolt the *Niagara Dream* had taken in his first encounter with the Link.

Then the darkness came.

11

The screen was lit in shades of grey. It showed a circle and two arrows, one large, one small; the rebel station and the two attacking ships.

"As you can see," the primary man in grey began, "our hired ships are even closer to the base than we originally forecast. In addition, there seems to be no resistance left from the rebels. Gentlemen, I think this proves, once again, the infallibility of the Faraway organization.

"Absolutely!" came the chorus.

"We will fly direct to the rebel station and take over from our hirelings. We will show the rebels what it means to challenge the might of Faraway."

"Positively!" came the chorus.

"We'll grind them under our heel!" cried a single voice from among the two dozen.

The main grey man singled out the speaker. "Your enthusiasm is commendable, sir. Unfortunate

that you had to speak out of order." He raised his hand and the speaker was gone.

"Absolutely!" cried the rest.

"Gentlemen," the man in grey replied, "you are a pleasure to work with."

12

Something was screaming at the rocket punk.

Johnny opened one eye. It was the ship's alarm.

He pushed himself to his feet and fell back in his chair. Groggy. What had happened? The Link?

"Hey, punk!" It was Sunside on the monitor. "Glad to see you with us! Far as I can figure, everybody on this freighter except for you and me and old man Flint has passed into the Void."

"The Link," the punk said. "Weapon I was using. Backed up."

"So that was the little jolt, huh? Well, kid, it's not our only problem. Flint says there's a boat docking on his side. It's a big one, as he tells it, and there's nothing he can do about it."

The punk looked around him. Everyone was out here, too. The technicians slumped at their boards. Even the eight who powered the Link lay on the floor, legs and arms intertwined. Most still had their helmets on. Only Joanna had her face free; her helmet had pulled loose from the machine and had rolled some distance away. The punk looked at her for a moment. With her eyes closed like that, she looked peaceful. And, for the first time, helpless. The rocket punk swore then that he'd save the rebel station, if only to save her.

Then he heard footsteps. Shambling footsteps, a lot of them. He looked at the entranceway to the control room. There stood a man, naked save for a blue and white cape draped across his head and shoulders. The man staggered and leaned against a wall. He seemed to be in as good a shape as the punk.

The cape moved, and an eyestalk popped out of its middle to survey the room.

"Shlavesh!" it said.

It was a Nutian.

"Hey, kid!" Sunside yelled on the monitor. "I can't raise Flint!"

"Never mind him!" the rocket punk called back. "We got trouble in the control room. Haul your hulk over here and you'll see some action!"

"Action?" Sunside smiled. "When you got nothin' to drink, it's the next best thing. Kid, I'm on my way!"

The punk didn't try to raise Flint. He was the third person to walk in the room wearing a blue cape.

Johnny looked wildly around

him. With all these weapons, was there one he could use? If he could only operate the Warleddan gun, he could freeze his enemies where they stood. Or if he could wield the Daclain sword, or command the helmet of Zadachai. But he didn't even know how to turn them on!

"Ah, human," the first Nutian said. "It ish foolish to reshisht. Come. Let one of my fellowsh grashp you in itsh psheudopodsh. The highesht calling of all lessher rachesh ish to become a Nutian slave!"

The punk backed away from the door. There had to be something he could use. He had to protect Joanna!

As if she had read his thoughts, Joanna groaned.

"Ah!" the Nutian looked at Joanna. "What a fine shpechimen! All good, good humansh! Good, good shlavesh!"

"Sunside to the rescue!"

"Watch out!" the punk cried, "Nutians!"

Sunside ran into the room, tripping over a blue ameboid that was without a human mount. He lay there, caught in a coughing spasm, until the Nutian covered him.

"Shee?" the first Nutian cried. "There ish no defenshe!"

There was more noise in the hall. Human shouts, weapons fire, a particularly foul, high pitched whine which the punk took to be cries of Nutian pain.

"Aha!" cried the tall, flamboyantly dressed figure in the door.

The Nutian turned its human around. "Captain Shcragg! At lasht we meet again!"

"That we do, Nutian scum! I've come for the Eye of Diamondus! And perhaps to fry a Nutian or two!"

The Eye! The punk had forgotten all about it. Maybe he could never discover its real power, but it was very hard and light enough to throw. He might be able to use it somehow.

Frank had laid it somewhere. The punk tried to remember the path they had taken through the machines.

There it was! Beyond Flint and his guiding fungus — the Nutian that was leading Flint straight towards the rocket punk!

But he had to get the Eye. It was time for the rocket punk to really earn his name.

"Blast them, boys!" Scragg called as he led his men into the midst of the Nutians.

A diversion. Just what the punk needed. He leapt in front of the approaching Flint, landing inches away from the fungus-controlled feet. The punk dropped to one knee and rolled. He somersaulted to his feet, running. And he had the Eye.

"Now, shlave!"

"Simpson! What is that?"

"Captain?"

"Shlave!"

"Free! I'm free at last!"

"Slithering space-eels! The fungus has got me!"

"Captain?"

"Shlave! Shlave Shcragg!"

"Free! Free!"

"Simpson!"

"Captain?"

"No! I won't let you take me!"

"Shlave!"

"Free!"

"No! I'm Scragg, not a pawn of some degenerate slime mold! I'll fight you till — "

His cries were muffled by a well-placed pseudopod.

"Captain?"

"Shlave Shcragg!"

"Free! I'm free!" The naked man went running from the room.

"Now!" the Great Nutian cried. "We conquer the resht of theshe foolsh!"

The punk held the Eye of Diamondus in his hand. And the Eye was glowing.

The Flint fungus reached for Joanna.

"No!" The punk cried. Flint froze, mid-motion.

Joanna opened her eyes. "Johnny? What's happening?"

The punk leapt to her side. "Joanna! The Eye is working!"

"What do you mean?" she asked after he had helped her to her feet.

"Stop!" Johnny called to a slave who was getting perilously close. The slave stopped.

"Let me clear my head," Joanna said. "Maybe I can help." She laid her hand over the hand that held the stone.

Now Johnny could see into her mind, too.

He swept through corridors of thought, wish tunnels, coils of emotion and desire. The punk flew through Joanna's mind. A thought of him grazed his consciousness. Hey! She didn't think so badly of him after all. He grasped at the thought, tugging at the tendrils that drifted at its edge. No use; it wafted away before he could get more than a vague sense of it. He turned away to immerse himself in the electric flow of cerebral impulses, plunging deeper and deeper into her fine, fine mind.

Tell them to stop, Joanna thought.

The punk's mind jerked back to the control room. Together, they told everybody to stop. And everybody stopped.

All the humans did, that is.The Nutians were still mobile. But even they were affected, repeating those piercing cries the punk had first heard coming from the hallway.

The Great Nutian slid away from Scragg. "We are leaving!" it bubbled. "Remember, we have done our besht to maintain good human/Nutian relationsh! If only you didn't make shuch good shlavesh!"

The Great Nutian and his fellows slithered away.

Joanna hugged Johnny. "We

did it!"

The rocket punk smiled his half smile. "Was there ever any doubt?"

The girl released him, a skeptical look to her own smile. The punk shrugged. After all, they knew each other's minds.

"Look," the first grey man said to the army of grey men who followed him down the corridor from were their three ships were docked. "No one offers us any resistance. Surely, this is a great victory for Faraway."

"Absolutely!" came the thundering response.

A crowd of blue ameboids came flowing around a bend in front of them.

"Ah," said the grey man. "It is our Nutian allies. Congratulations on a well fought battle."

The Nutians said nothing.

"Have you anything to report?"

Still silence.

"Has something gone wrong?

"Wait! What are you doing on my leg? Is this a Nutian form of greeting? What are you doing? Wait —"

The large blue and white Nutian waved his pseudopods above the first grey man.

"Shlavesh!"

13

"So that's the story?" Frank said.

"Near as I can figure it," Johnny replied. "Who knows why the Eye worked? Maybe it was the power surge from the Link."

"Or maybe," Joanna added, "it had to wait until someone really needed it."

"Well," Joanna's mother said, "in picking you, Joanna seems to have made the right decision for a change. I suppose you can stay for a couple of days, if you really want to."

So the rocket punk decided to stay until things were straightened out. The Nutians had left all their old slaves behind. Many needed medical attention; many were almost starved to death. Scragg was sent on his way in a *Demon Lover* stripped of weapons. Which added a few more choice pieces to the Free People Armory.

The Free People refused Flint's demand that he be compensated for the time he spent in helping to defend the station, for which he was properly indignant. They did, however, offer him a choice of three ships to replace the disintegrated *Niagara Dream.* Ships left by a force from Faraway which had mysteriously disappeared.

The Free People offered Sunside a permanent home on the rebel base, but he declined, saying he was still looking for a place good enough to drink himself to death.

In the end, the Free People made the same offer to the rocket punk.

He went to see Joanna.

"You heard?" he said.

"I pushed for you," she replied.

"I dunno," the punk said. "I want to feel the push of rockets, shooting me through space."

"Or the feeling of sailing free," Joanna added, "in your own, new world, hanging in the midst of space."

"I want to feel myself out there, in the space between the stars."

"Or you can carve yourself a new space. Locked in a system, perhaps, but free of the constraints that damn most worlds. Free to be one with the universe."

The punk scuffed a magnetic boot across the floor. "I don't like planet law...."

"Nor do we."

They looked at each other.

"Hey, kid!" It was Sunside. He and Flint were moving towards the dock where the newly dubbed *Flint's Folly* waited. "You coming?"

The rocket punk decided he'd stay a little longer. ●

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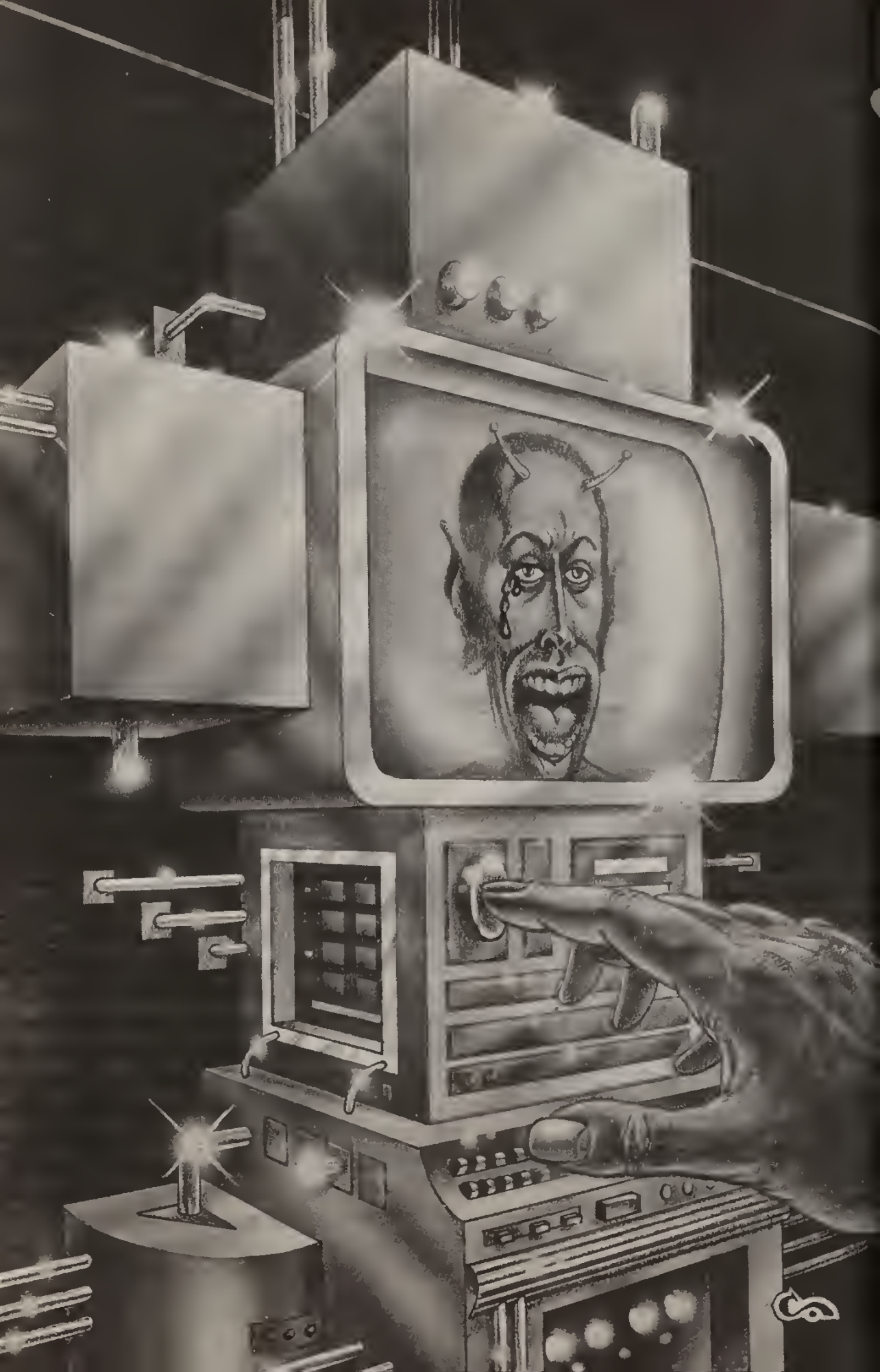

There can be only one God. But sometimes His identity becomes confused....

Has The Rain A Father?

by Meg Files

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

— Job, 38: 1-2

CONDITIONING:

And me, I was Daddy and Mother's sweet little girl, Hannah, *virgo intacta,* eager enough for the isolation of Vul-Gata after seventeen years of Earth. It had not been easy to suffer through the classes in twentieth-century mythologies with the gold cross hanging from the chain around my neck. On Vul-Gata, it was my choice to be outcast.

I rather think, too, they were eager to let us go; we were an embarrassment. Daddy said that zeal causes apathy to avert its face.

As missionaries, Daddy and Mother had prepared themselves

for strange customs, and for the native reaction to their own equally odd dress and practices. They were prepared to make The Message understood in terms of the natives' way of life. Hadn't St. Paul couched the news for *his* listeners in pagan terms?

But the language was primitively concrete, and the only observable customs were what Daddy called "cross-species dominance/submission posturings." I think Daddy and Mother were disappointed in such easy raw material.

The ship, a light space skiff, sculled into position above Vul-Gata. Inside, Theos checked the motion, leaving the ship pendant above the planet like a trinket on a chain.

He returned to his scribblings, running fingers through his dark beard.

"Some of the reinforcement will be beyond our control, you know," he said.

"Right," Deil said. "A finger in the fire hurts, after all. But it'll be negligible, and we can correct for it, as we'll have to correct for those Terrans. I don't like that little surprise. But they'll be a random constant for all three trials."

Theos shook his head. "I still can't believe Council is letting us do this. We may get our own fingers burned, my loved one, if we can't extract our tampering in the end."

His fingers smoothed the long strands of hair over the balding top of his head, a private ritual of disbelief that his youth was deserting him.

"We can do it now," Deil said. "We've flipped back to any number of given presents, and you know we've got the technique down pat. We only have to limit our interference to the rewards and punishments, considering the source of our funds."

And she added, stroking Theos' smooth scalp patch: "I still think it's ironic that the Faith in Darkness people funded this experiment."

Theos nodded. "I know," he said. "You'd think they'd be the last to have us tampering with their god's beyond-mortal-comprehension universe."

"I've been thinking about that," Deil said. "They've always held out for free will, right? I mean otherwise, you might as well throw out morality. So here's their chance at last to challenge us determinists, and on our own empirical grounds yet. Before, there was no repeating the past, and the argument was futile."

"Might be you're right," Theos said. "At least we've got the funds. We may think they're a pack of irrational fanatics, but they can influence Council." He nodded at his notes. "Let's go over this again."

"Those poor Vul-Gatans," Deil

said. "They'll never know what hit them. Conditioned like rodents in a cage."

"They better not know," Theos said. "That'd wreck the whole experiment. And burn our pinkies besides."

Becky was only ten, and she played with the native kids, roughhousing or teaching them her games of school and house. Of course Daddy and Mother were busy, especially with the language, expanding it to include all their god-words, and trying to compile dictionary, grammar, readers. Bible translation would come soon. Mother checked on my progress through the programmed lessons we'd brought for me and Becky. I might as well have been back to Earth as far as Daddy was concerned; I thought we'd be together more out here.

Anyway, Mother and Daddy were too busy lassoing souls to notice anything about 'Gata, anything but their ropes looping toward the invisible. I had little to occupy myself, and I saw this little planet's pattern before they did. And I knew from the beginning that the mission wouldn't work. These people needed no god.

Mother and Daddy had never given up on miracles. Every ice crystal, every tadpole, every gilled fetus was a miracle. As was every earthquake, every tornado, every whirlpool. Miracles were God's handiwork — His pleasure, His censure — however misunderstood by paltry humans.

'Gata had its miracles, too. Only this: here they were not random. Daddy would say, "Neither are Earth's." But here cause-and-effect made sense. The god of 'Gata had no notion of subtlety.

All right, examples:

From behind the trees surrounding a cleared area where about twenty-five native huts squatted like old men, I had taken to playing the voyeur — out of boredom at first, and then as an opportunity to "study" in the raw the humanoid creature that I so little understood. The natives were my flower in a crannied wall.

From behind my thick tree I watched while a child of about six led another slightly taller girl by the elbow. The second girl's eyes were opaque, the pupils rolling upward. The younger girl drew the other's hands down to the purple wildflowers on the ground, then crushed one under her nose, drew her hands softly over chalky birch-like bark and dark rough bark, towed her under a tangled arch of low branches, tapped her finger gently on a thorn, and on, touring the settlement's surroundings, wading across a mud-colored stream, and on. A very sweet little trust-walk. And when they sat under a tree giggling, two of the tree's pulpy fruits fell in front of

them, a small reward. Coincidence?

From behind my thick tree, I watched while a man and woman rolled out of one of the huts in a cloud of tussle like a cartoon, a fist thrust out of the cloud for a moment, punch-stars and angry growls drawn in around the cloud. The couple quickly drew a crowd that pulsed in and out with the battle, not interfering. What happened then was so obvious that I laughed aloud. The thunder god rumbled and stuck a neat fork of lightning into the couple's hut, which flared the bright punishment for all to witness. Coincidence?

When I was thirteen, I'd gushed out all those poems doubting a god who cast down suffering on the wicked and the righteous alike.

Daddy had read them, and said, "Yes, we suffer. And we have suffered before, and we are tested always."

I wondered how they would take it, Mother and Daddy, when they came to see 'Gata's planned miracles. (Daddy: "Earth's are not random, my Hannah. We merely cannot rise high enough to see the pattern.") As a sign that the planet was especially blessed? Or that they, spreaders of the Word, had risen in His estimation enough to be trusted with understanding?

I lived behind my thick tree, watching, watching. I came to know the people of the clearing. They became individuals; I learned their names, who shared huts as mates, which were children's home-huts. And I found the one called Rane.

Mother's translation of "Vul-Gata" was "Whole Ground," and as Earth had had to be my entire world but would not be, so it was with this Whole Ground. Daddy was used up by the people, and he had no touching, no laughter for me any more. And I knew that no intensity of gaze would bring me the dark boy called Rane.

But I watched him anyway, as I'd watched Ty back in school, staring through lectures and demos at his face until he'd turn toward me in blank disgust. Rane didn't feel my watching, though, and my thick tree hid me carefully.

Becky had lice in her hair. Mother kerosened the blonde hair, and ordered us both isolated from the 'Gatans.

"I don't touch them," I said.

Daddy met her eyes in warning. "If she just observes, she'll absorb the language," he said.

Daddy put his arm around me. "I think eventually we'll have her teach the children, Mother," he said.

So I was allowed behind my tree. Mother and Daddy had surfaced only briefly, and were quickly submerged again in plotting Sunday classes and services, baptisms, marriages, and funerals for the 'Gatans. A brown-leathered

woman who seemed to be my Rane's grandmother whittled crosses which several of the other old women wore on hide strips around their necks, the rough wood somehow natural between the hanging dugs.

And then one day at dusk I followed Rane distantly, losing him as his dark body became a sapling, and then tracking him as the straight trunk of his body moved again.

I ran over the fallen leaves after him, and the blood ran through my body. The woods were dusky red through my eyes, and I lost him again. "Rane," I whispered, and ran in the dark, "oh, my Rane."

He was crouched behind a tree. We both gasped at the sudden meeting. But then he was unafraid and laughed. I laughed a little also, and spoke his name. He laughed again, and said, "Ipta?"

"Hannah," I told him.

Then Rane touched my hip. "Hannah," he said. "Hannah."

We lay on the falling leaves unbreathing, me Hannah and him Rane, and then we breathed shallowly against each other's neck. This was the whole ground — me in my whole body, an ordered world, and a love deep-breathing now with me.

When Sunday came, though, it was not easy to sit beside Daddy's pulpit, to sit tainted on my bench, to pump out the little organ's purity.

The congregation, larger each Sunday, sang in tuneless 'Gatan: "These things shall be, where e'er the sun . . ."

And Daddy stood handsome behind his rough wooden pulpit, and spoke in halting 'Gatan of Godly lives, of rewards here and then, of punishments for the wicked both here and after. The dark people heard him, and it seemed to me they believed in his God, though I had not thought they would.

Then some provocation, an end to sufferance perhaps, shuddered through the people. But I saw Rane in the crowd watching me solemnly, and I thought perhaps the shuddering was only mine.

Daddy said at dinner, though, "It is the awareness of sin dawning on them. You watch, they'll start copying our clothing now, too."

Was lying in the forest with Rane a sin to the god of Vul-Gata? When punishment came, at least I'd understand; I'd be no Job protesting virtue. And we sinned again, Rane and I.

But how would you live, my Rane, with the erratic god of Earth?

Though Daddy's Sunday morning worshippers grew in number with the weeks, they still came to the big church-hut naked. Daddy was satisfied, anyway, with their increasing fervor.

"But," he told us, "they must now learn submission to the mystery."

Rane perched stiffly on the front row pew, watching my fingers on the keyboard and the fear that must have been in my eyes. He knew: he lay both hands, fingers spread, on his stomach. I nodded, trying for a wry grin, and then during Daddy's opening prayer, slipped outside to keep my tears private.

The sky was piled with dark and laden clouds, and as the first heavy drops fell, I went back to the prayer inside.

The moaning began during the long prayer, and was a keening by the time Daddy spoke, "In Thy name we ask, O Lord. Amen."

I slid back to my bench, and to the Doxology I played there was a faint counterpoint: a tapped drum.

Daddy held them during his calm sermon, his voice working to banish the frenzy. Outside was the thunder and the rain, and Daddy told of presumptuous Job and how God at last had answered him, pointing out His power ... Who shut in the sea with doors ... Have you commanded the morning ... walked in the recesses of the deep? ... Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? ... the face of the deep is frozen...

And after, his eyes signalled to me: low, help me my Hannah, keep it low now.

I played softly, let be there light, but the drum was there also, and another joined, and the natives' atonal singing grew shrill with the drums.

The people stood, Rane among them, arms waving, eyes white, vertiginous. The frenzy was a whirlpool, catching each, towing each into the swirling. The whirlpool was an enormous boring phallus, its ardor swirling toward God; it would bore rapacious into God.

He answered. The whirlpool broke up and the people bent over. Daddy and I were not touched, but silent tears ran from Rane's eyes. With pain He answered.

Daddy's hand pushed at my back. "Let's get out of here," he whispered. "This is the golden calf, this is His displeasure."

My Rane sat naked on the floor like a child, sucking in air, as if the pain had punched the wind from him.

"They hate your God," I said to Daddy. "They hate Him, and I don't blame them."

"Hannah," he said, "easy now, Hannah." His fingertips swiped at the tears on my cheek, and I jerked away.

"I hate Him, too," I shouted. "I hate this stupid cross always hanging on me, and I hate His damn manipulation, and I hate always feeling guilty."

I ran out into the rain yelling "Guilty, guilty, guilty," past Mother and Becky and into the woods.

Later, though, Daddy found me. My fury had dissipated, and I cried a little against his shoulder.

"So tell me," he said. "What's this all about?"

"I'm pregnant," I said weakly. "Anyway, I think I am."

He looked blank, as if he were the only male on the planet. Would I swell with His son, then?

Suddenly knowing was in his eyes and blood filled his face.

"Leave," he said. "Go live with them then, if you love to wallow with them so. You are not my daughter."

I nodded and stood. Soon I would grow with the baby inside me. This could not be the punishment. So I walked from Daddy.

His hands turned me around. "Hannah," he said, holding me, crying, "it's all right, baby, it's all right. I forgive you."

Theos and Deil stood in the intimacy of the ship's bunk compartment. They argued.

"Why?" Theos said. "It makes no sense to reverse the order now. We'll save the control for the third trial, as we'd laid it out. That's the way Council authorized the experiment, don't forget."

Deil watched his narrow eyes. "Your refusal to do the control trial next is reason alone," she said. "That would mean keeping your fingers from the control console, though, wouldn't it?"

He rolled his eyes, and trying for jocularity, pinched her buttock. "Your reasoning faculties are failing, loved one," he said.

"Don't play with me," she said. "So tell me then: what was the purpose of that negative reinforcement for their worship?"

Theos' lips swelled. He pouted, "It's called shaping the behavior. You've heard of it, no?"

"Toward what?" Deil said. "You've got it backwards. And they committed no physical or emotional harm anyway."

"Well," Theos said stoutly, "I was insulted."

"Oh, this is some experiment," she said. "Now listen: we'll make the control trial next, hands off entirely, and then finish with the partial reinforcement, extinction, spontaneous recovery, and all that. Change the order, or I quit."

Theos muttered through his beard at the ship's floor. "It's those Terrans. Like those of the Faith in Darkness ilk. The whole suffering uniferse is infested. They've destroyed the purity of the whole thing."

"No," she said. "Not them. You. You'll destroy it."

Theos grinned slyly at her. "All right," he said. "Control trial next. Hands off for now. Except from you."

He reached out and kneaded her breasts.

Deil drew away from him. "Nobody loves the manipulator," she said.

CONTROL:

And me, I was Daddy and

Mother's sweet little girl, Hannah, *virgo intacta,* eager enough for the isolation of Vul-Gata after seventeen years of Earth. It had not been easy to suffer through the classes in twentieth-century mythologies with the gold cross hanging from the chain around my neck. On Vul-Gata, it was my choice to be outcast.

I rather think, too, they were eager to let us go; we were an embarrassment. Daddy said that zeal causes apathy to avert its face.

As missionaries, Daddy and Mother had prepared themselves for strange customs, and for the native reaction to their own equally odd dress and practices. They were prepared to make The Message understood in terms of the natives' way of life. Hadn't St. Paul couched the news for *his* listeners in pagan terms?

But the language was primitively concrete, and the only observable customs were what Daddy called "cross-species dominance/submission posturings." I think Daddy and Mother were disappointed in such easy raw material.

Becky was only ten, and she played with the native kids, roughhousing or teaching them her games of school and house. Of course Daddy and Mother were busy, especially with the language, expanding it to include all their god-words, and trying to compile dictionary, grammar, readers. Bible translation would come soon. Mother checked on my progress through the programmed lessons we'd brought for me and Becky. I might as well have been back on Earth as far as Daddy was concerned; I thought we'd be together more out here.

The mission was succeeding. Daddy made it simple for them: the Lord makes demands, but offers saving grace. The wicked shall suffer. The righteous are transformed, shall enter the Kingdom.

They were in haste to make their lives clean in His eyes, each Sunday lining up for marriage, for baptism, and laying on the altar blossoms, sweets, good deeds.

I sat on the little organ's bench during the services, watching Daddy and accompanying the 'Gatans' monotonous singing.

I began watching the boy named Rane each Sunday. I did not think he noticed my watching, as Ty, the one I'd singled out at school, had never noticed.

But soon this was different from Earth. There Ty had sensed my watching and with a disgusted face had banished me. This dark boy was different, though, and he came in the afternoon with three younger kids to play with Becky. He taught them body-flips and showed them hand-walking. He glanced quickly at my background presence as they all played.

Leaving Becky and the three

young ones tussling in a heap, he walked to me, and he sat beside me.

"Rane," I said, to show I knew his name.

"Ipta?" he said in 'Gatan.

"Hannah," I said. He hefted the gold cross on the chain around my neck.

I took it over my head and handed it to him. He smiled and hung it against his smooth chest.

Daddy came home then, and the sudden lines between his eyes sent Rane away. I thought: let him think what he would. *He* never hugged my shoulders any more and laughed.

Mother found lice in Becky's hair then, and we were forbidden native company. Daddy abstractedly agreed, for his converts had come to question. They had accepted the trappings of faith, he said, but could not accept the power of the Savior working through His consecrated servant. They could not accept pain as His will, though it be beyond their understanding.

Ironically, an old woman whittling at a rough cross sliced off the end of a finger. She walked to her hut, lay inside and fell asleep. All night the blood flowed from the finger, and by morning she was gray-skinned and dead.

A blind girl, a little younger than Becky, was found lying on the fallen leaves, her knees tight to her chin. She was rigid, her face contorted in cramped death. One hand held squashed berries from the bush the birds and the people had learned to avoid.

Daddy could only say, "Bow to His will."

Then His blind will struck my Rane, felling a tree on his leg. He crawled, dragging the smashed leg, into the woods to heal like an animal.

He was not in the church-hut Sunday morning to meet my eyes and smile. That Sunday drums began during the Doxology, and the congregation shuddered nervously with them.

"Give in," Daddy said, "give in to the mystery."

But they stood, shuddering together. The muscles of their arms swelled in hate. Daddy took my elbow and strolled us out and to our own hut.

"They must succumb," he said, "but I do not think they have consciousness enough."

His arm was across my back, and he squeezed my shoulder.

"We can go home," I said. "It's only a few more months until the ship returns."

"Yes," Daddy said. "We can go home, to another godless world."

"You say there is a pattern," I said.

"A child leads me," he said bitterly, but he squeezed me close.

I found Rane in the woods, sitting against the base of a thick tree. He rose and came toward me,

his left leg bent and giving under him. His body twisted with each step to catch himself.

He caught my shoulders then, to balance himself, I thought. But there was a blindness of rage in his eyes and he shoved me down on the leaves, and fell on top of me.

"Where is the reward?" he said in hard 'Gatan.

He yanked at my pants and thrust into me. "Play with us," he said in my ear, "twist another insect leg, squash a child."

Daddy conducted calm worship for a few of the people on Sunday mornings now, but most avoided the church-hut like poison berries. We waited for the ship to carry us shamefully home.

I could not tell Daddy I was pregnant, but finally it grew obvious to him and Mother.

"Little hot pants," Mother hissed.

Daddy slapped my face and then held me, crying, trying to smooth the welted finger-stripes on my cheek.

"You are forgiven," he whispered. "But we will keep our shame on Vul-Gata now. I have failed, but this will be our world now."

Deil entered the control room. "They've seen the films," she said. "The Faith in Darkness people. They say we induced those frenzies. It's blasphemy, they say."

Theos' eyes held to the screen where the little figures danced in frenzied jerks. They wore no crosses now, and they lurched in the clearing to the drums.

"They've withdrawn the funds," she said to the bald spot to the top of his head. "And Council has cancelled the remainder of the experiment."

His hand went to the console, his eyes holding to the screen.

"What are you doing?" Deil said. "Leave it alone. We have a lot of data now, don't ruin it. How are we going to define the preconditioning level if you tamper with the control trial?"

"Bow," Theos said to the sepia figures on the screen.

"You are no longer my loved one, Theos," she said.

"Bow, you people," he said, and bent them. "Bow."

The face of the deep is frozen. ●

Editorial *(cont. from pg. 5)*

than trash novels or tv sitcoms, when we howl in outrage at reviewers and critics who accuse the genre of being no more than that? Can we permit the gap between what we *say* we are, and what we *really* are, to exist? Or is this, perhaps, a moment when we can make a brave statement with our fiction, our literary love, our bodies, and our annual World gathering?

Arizona, the WorldCon and I offer you this opportunity. ●

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APR

SCIENCE

Hal Clement

Science for Fiction #6

At a recent (November 1977) Harvard Law School Forum meeting, Carl Sagan of extra-Terrestrial intelligence fame suited his talk to the audience by discussing evidence. More specifically, he tried to make clear to a group of (mostly) non-scientists why scientists in general are able to believe in such fantastic and anti-common-sense things as quantum mechanics and some of the implications of relativity, but remain wholly unimpressed by Velikovsky's worlds-in-collision thesis, von Daniken's (and his imitators') ancient astronauts, and the Bermuda Triangle.

In spite of the common charge of the True Believers, the reason does not lie in the intrinsic conservatism of a scientific Establishment. There are scientists, admittedly, who fall in love with their own pictures of the universe and become unable to face evidence that these are wrong or even incomplete. However, if Science were a monolithic body of minds of this type, we would never have heard of Darwin or Einstein. Both these gentlemen submitted to the

professionals of their time ideas which were far more unsettling to any conservative than anything in the Flying Saucer or Bermuda Triangle line. Both were eventually taken seriously because they submitted large bodies of evidence of a sort which could be checked and reviewed, and by fitting this evidence together into a coherent unit which permitted predictions.

To compare Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision,* von Daniken's *Ancient Astronauts,* or Hapgood's *Earth's Shifting Crust* to Darwin's *Origin of Species* is ridiculous.

This all applies to science fiction, on at least two levels. First and more obviously, the sensational side of the Saucers and Triangles game provides the base for any number of formula stories and, very probably, for really original ones as well. Second, for those of us in the more disciplined hard science fiction line, the existence of these essentially cultist phenomena gives us both the opportunity and the duty to consider implications and corollaries — the sort of thing I was discussing in the last issue of UNEARTH. On this basis, the cult beliefs fall into two rather clear-cut categories.

First: There is no particular reason to dismiss as impossible the notion that interstellar visitors have been, and still may be, flitting around our planet. It is possible that some agency or other is making away with ships and aircraft, though the evidence that its activities are centered in the "Triangle" is most unimpressive. Proving a negative is a notoriously difficult job, as our founding fathers well knew when they set up the Constitutional rule putting the burden of proof on the accuser.

Neither the saucer nor the triangle pushers have made much of a case. The latter was pretty well disposed of by an apparently competent investigator (Lawrence David Kusche, *The Bermuda Triangle Mystery Solved,* Harper & Row, 1975). The saucers are harder to shoot down because of the vast number of "sightings"; but the Air Force spent a fairly large amount of tax money over a good many years, and finally reached the conclusion that at least no threat to national security was involved. The claim that the Air Force is doing a deliberate cover-up strikes me as a mixture of paranoia and love for sensationalism. I spent my last fifteen or sixteen years in the Air Force Reserve doing public relations work; my sideline as a science fiction writer and my interest in such paranormal events were widely known; and my rank as colonel would, I think, have given me at least a glimpse of any such goings-on. I didn't catch any such glimpse. I realize that the conspiracy might be above the colonel level, or confined to a special in-group defined

in some other way than by rank, but I am emotionally unsuited to be a John Bircher. As I said, negatives are hard to prove, but I am totally unimpressed by the present body of flying saucer evidence. I merely admit the possibility — and wish that the saucer crews, if they are really investigating Earth, would come and interview me instead of a couple of Mississippi fishermen of dubious sobriety. I'll be glad to live with the fact that no one will believe *me,* either; at least *I'll* know the answer!

In spite of, or perhaps because of, all this, there is no trouble using saucers and triangles in science fiction stories (the trouble is to be original about it). You'll want to invent a suitable propulsion system for your saucers — at a higher level, I hope, than Dick Tracy's magnetic space car (magnetic fields have a very well understood energy content). You should invent the machinery with which your characters built the pyramids, but here again the main difficulty is to be original. It would be nice if you knew what an astronomical unit and a parsec were, but this is merely the normal demand on a hard sf writer who knows that his readers probably will jump on him if he misuses such terms.

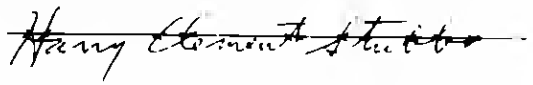
Second: The Velikovsky thesis offers much more serious problems to the consistent writer. It implies the existence of at least one completely unknown force. Inventing such a force is not difficult, of course; Doc Smith's Bergenholms which allowed him to drive inertialess space ships and, later, planets around the galaxy represent only one example. Of course, if the strange force is to be *natural,* one must also explain why it hasn't operated for the last couple of thousand years. All this is perfectly possible for any good imagination, but one must realize that doing it *is necessary.* It was Velikovsky's failure to grasp this fact which caused his thesis to be so roughly dismissed, not a conspiracy of the Scientific Establishment.

To anyone who knows enough astronomy to compute a simple visual binary orbit (something I give regularly to my high school students), the gyrations and peregrinations of Mars and Venus described by I. V. resemble the tale of the Little Leaguer who reported that he had come to bat with the bases loaded and no outs, had hit a screaming line drive, but had not gotten to first because the baseball had followed a pattern of curves which caused it to touch each of the three preceding runners lightly on the shoulder before any of them had reached the next base, thus retiring the side.

Baseballs, travelling under the influence of Newtonian and aerodynamic forces, don't travel that way. Planets, without even the complication of aerodynamics,

don't either. Some other force is needed, and Velikovsky didn't seem to realize this (or possibly felt that Divine intervention was enough; it is not always easy to follow his thinking).

Some of his supporters have insisted that recent discoveries tend to confirm his claims. Their arguments in general resemble the proof that my signature is a straight line — you draw the line through it first, call everyone's attention to the places where the two



meet, and firmly ignore everything else.

For example, it is true that an interplanetary magnetic field is now known to exist. It is also true that it would have to be intensified enormously to match the earth's own field, and the latter would have to be increased many times in strength before it could pull a jackknife out of a child's hand. Moving planets — well, it's almost superfluous to mention that the force of a dipole field goes down approximately with the *cube,* not just the square, of the distance.

It is true, as mentioned a few years ago in *Pensee,* a pro-Velikovsky publication, that two different radio-frequency measures of Venus' temperature at two different times gave different values, with the later one lower. It is not true that this "proves" Venus to be cooling down according to dogma. I must credit the author with admitting that the two measurements were made at different frequencies, but if he knew that this implied different altitudes in Venus' atmosphere he didn't mention it. Whether from ignorance or intellectual dishonesty, the article winds up not worth the reading.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am more than willing to admit that there are forces and phenomena in the universe which we have not yet observed, much less come to understand. I am, after all, a science-fiction writer. There may even be something to reincarnation. The assumption that some real evidence for the Velikovsky thesis had been found could be a fine exercise for the disciplined imagination of an author, and might provide a very good story if too much wordage weren't spent knocking "orthodox" science. The basic idea is no more unbelievable, intrinsically, than relativity was; all it lacks is the evidence, which relativity has in such abundance. The notion that sundry ancient legends couldn't have been made up without some such pattern of events actually having happened and been seen by our ancestors is not merely not evidence, it's an insult to the imagination of every human being since the teller of the first fish story.

So move Venus and Mars around as much as you please; but

(cont. on pg. 127)

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(Ed. note: I knew, as I listened to the following (delivered at the Harlan Ellison Roast, in November), that we might have a difficult time getting this issue's writing column. As it turned out, the column was indeed late in arriving; we offer Charles Platt's speech from the Roast in lieu of it. — J O-L)

WRITING

Mr. Ellison mentioned to me, earlier, that he had expected the audience to be larger tonight. On the other hand, maybe the audience expected Mr. Ellison to be larger.

Fourteen years ago, I made a vow of silence. I promised Harlan Ellison that I would keep his most shameful secret. Until tonight, I have kept that promise. But now, I must tell the world the truth.

My sordid story begins in a sordid setting: a Los Angeles Jack-in-the-Box fast-food burger restaurant. In front of me in the line waiting for service was a horribly scruffy, unshaven, ragged little man, wearing a stained buckskin jacket and disintegrating sneakers. Sounding like a scaled-down Broderick Crawford, he snapped out his order to a pretty blonde behind the counter. Then, his pallid face twitched, his bloodshot eyes rolled, and he suggested, "How about a date, sweetcakes?"

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The rhythm of her gum-chewing never faltered. She said one word only. "Next!"

But he was not discouraged. He leaned close enough to breathe Binaca on her. "Hey," he said, "back home I've got satin sheets on a queen-size bed, an almost-complete collection of Playboy magazine, and a color TV!"

"Here's your Jumbo Jack and fries," she told him. "Take it and get lost, you smelly creep."

He grinned as if she'd given him a compliment. He handed back the hamburger. "You take it," he said. "Shove it up your skirt. It might thaw you out some."

"I don't have to take this crap from a cheap, dirty little jerk like you," she replied, with equal charm.

Well, to cut a long story short, this went on for another fifteen minutes. The insults got more and more obscene. But a strange transformation occurred. Somehow, the scruffy man's obnoxiousness paid off. Somehow, the girl started laughing, even though she knew she ought to have punched him in the face. Somehow, she ended up giving him her phone number, her dress size, her taste in perfume, her address, the time she got off work, the name of her father, and the amount of money he made as an investment broker. These details the scruffy man wrote down in a fat black notebook whose pages were already crammed with his charmingly child-like handwriting.

I knew, then, that this degenerate person was the one I needed. When he walked from the restaurant to his rusting, decrepit car, I was waiting there for him. "With your offensive obnoxiousness, and my talent," I told him, "we can *both* get *rich.*"

Naturally, he was skeptical. But when I outlined my plan, he saw I was right. I, the quiet, reserved, talented, modest Englishman, would sit at home writing short science fiction stories. He, the aggressive, repulsive, untalented pig-person, would go out and sell the stories, by force of personality, in a world where people are always impressed by the one who shouts loudest and longest about his own abilities. Together, we would split the money, fifty-fifty.

Well, I guess you're expecting me to tell you that that scruffy, degenerate person in the Jack-in-the-Box 14 years ago, was Harlan Ellison. Yes. Well, you're right.

And today you can see how well my scheme paid off. With me ghost-writing, and Ellison selling the stuff, we have published hundreds of stories and won scores of awards. Of course, Harlan has taken all the credit. But that's all right. I never wanted fame. I was happy just to see my work in print. I was grateful just to get paid. In fact, our arrangement could have continued forever; but, Harlan got greedy.

Originally, he had freely admitted that he was an illiterate hustler who couldn't put one word in front of another. But as his fame grew, he started wondering if, maybe, writing was as easy as it looked. He started pestering me with his own story ideas.

Despite his aggressive demeanor, his ideas were naive, childlike, and romantically sappy. He would have been best off writing fairy stories for little girls. For instance, early on he suggested I write a story titled "I see a mouse and I must scream." Luckily I was able to turn the title around and produce one of our better-known pieces of melodramatic raving, to fit. But then he wanted me to write "Lovebird Stories," and then he wanted to edit a big anthology titled "Timorous Revisions." And he thought up a nonfiction series of columns praising his favorite TV shows — *The Flintstones, I Love Lucy, My Favorite Martian* — and the columns were to be called "The Glass Treat." I coped with all this, but he almost had me beaten when, in a brief religious phase, he suggested "Denominations ain't nothing but Sects misspelled."

In 1968, he not only gave me a title, he gave me a whole first draft of a story he'd tried to write himself. And he insisted it should be published as it stood. Well, we argued, had a big scene over it. I finally won, rewrote the story, and it earned a Hugo award. But I still have an old Xerox of Harlan's charmingly sappy, cute original version, and to show you what I mean, I'm going to read an extract. Harlan wanted to call it "A Boy and His Frog."

I sat down on the bottom step and sighed (the story begins). "Gosh darn it," I said. "Things sure are getting hard, for a kid in Sleepyville."

"Why don't you quit moaning and take me down to the pond?" said Bud. Bud is my frog. He was sitting on the step beside me, outside Harvey's Candy Store.

"Being a frog, you wouldn't understand," I told him.

"Wouldn't understand what?" said Bud.

"Well, I mean, there's things a fellow *needs*," I told him. "Things — like, I mean, do you know how *long* it's been since I had — since I got —"

Bud groaned. "You're not going to start talking about *chocolate bars* again," he complained.

"Well, jeepers! I mean we've been to every store in town, and there's not a single O Henry, no tootsie rolls, not even a Hershey bar, none of my favorites. What's a kid to do? Since this nasty World War III started, with the sugar rationing and all, you can't find hardly anything worth eating no more."

"Any more," Bud corrected me.

"All right, wise guy. If you're *so* smart, why don't you find me some candy?"

Bud blinked slowly. He made a

kind of a burp noise. He blinked again, and this time his eyes stayed closed. I could tell he was trying to pick up the scent for me. I waited. Finally he opened his eyes and shook his head, as much as a frog *can* shake his head. "Nothing," he said.

"Well, gee whillakers," I told him. "We might as well go to the movies. I heard they're showing a Donald Duck cartoon that's just full of laffs."

"Suits me," said Bud. "Can I ride in your pocket?"

So we went down to the Bijou. I paid at the door and Miss Wiggins, the woman who ran the place, took my catapault. "You kids get excited in there, never know what's liable to happen," she said.

The movie was an old one, but that was OK, all the kids were digging it, and Bud liked it too. Just near the end of it, he hopped onto my shoulder and croaked real quietly, "Dick, there's some in here."

"What are you talking about?" I whispered.

"Candy," he said. "Mounds, I think. Or M & Ms."

"You're joshing me," I said. "If you can smell it, how come the others haven't? There's Billy over there, with Hiram, his toad. There's Jimmy with his terrapin, Joe with his chameleon, Walter with his gila monster..."

"Frogs are different," said Bud. "I tell you, I *know*. There's candy in the back pocket of that kid there, fourth row, aisle seat. Do I look the type of frog who'd jump to conclusions?"

I ignored his attempt at wit. I looked and saw who he meant. "Oh, Jeepers!" I moaned. "Not Mary-Sue Rafferty! Why'd it have to be her who's got it?"

Well, there's more to the story. Dick and his frog follow Mary-Sue Rafferty out of the movie theater to a soda fountain down the block. Here, Dick tries to steal the candy out of Mary-Sue's back pocket. But she has a mouse trap hidden in there and it catches Dick's fingers, very painfully. Worse still, Jerry, a friend of Mary-Sue, sees what happens, and hauls Dick off to an old hut in Jerry's back yard. There, Jerry and some other kids punish Dick by twisting his arm till he cries uncle, and then they pull his hair, box his ears, tickle him, and force him to kiss girls. Luckily, Mary-Sue takes pity on Dick, and she helps him escape. She thinks he's cute and wants to take him home to meet her folks, who probably have a stash of black-market candy, because her father works for the government. But by this time, Dick's frog, Bud, is getting dehydrated and desperately needs a refreshing dunk in the local frog pond. Faced with this dilemma, Dick can only make one choice. He passes up the chance to get a piece of Mary-Sue's candy, and tells her some other time. Girls and candy cannot come between a boy and his frog.

Well. As I say, I managed to re-

write this dreck into something halfway decent, with some appeal to those over 18. But Harlan went on, year after year, trying to muscle in on my creative role. He started sitting in bookstore windows for a week at a time, learning to type, and telling customers he was producing a short story a day. He insisted that on *The Last Dangerous Visions* he would not merely be a figurehead, he would do the actual editing himself. We all know how *that* has worked out. Worst of all, he started short-changing me on royalties.

Harlan, there is only so much a human being can stand. For years I have carried you. I ghost-wrote your stories, your articles, your lectures, your award acceptance speeches. I even wrote your speech for tonight's roast. I never complained. I was never jealous of your success with my material.

But enough is enough. The worm has turned. I've had all I can take. It's all over. I want my cut, and I want it in full. Give me my Hugos! Give my my Nebulas! Give me my guest-of-honor banquets! Pay up, Ellison! And own up, you snake! Give me the credit you stole! Pay the debt, in full, or I swear, I'll never write for you again! ●

(The writing column was, in fact, delayed by a movie script Mr. Ellison is preparing. It will appear in issue #6, available in May.)

Random Motes

An important item was omitted from the Story Contest information in issue #5: the story judged to be best among the three winners in the first category will receive, in addition to the payments indicated, a cash bonus of $100.

* * *

Effective with this issue, the cover price of UNEARTH goes to $1.25. Current subscription prices will remain in effect until May 15, 1978, when the yearly rate will become $5.00. ($9/2 years, $13/3 years).

* * *

UNEARTH accepts fiction submissions only from writers who have not yet sold to major sf magazines or anthologies. We use no form rejections; every manuscript is read by the editors, who comment personally on each story. Normal reporting time is one to four weeks; if we are backlogged, it may take longer.

Join Harvey Tinkle on the longest flight of all....

Compliments of the Founding Fathers

by Richard P. Saggio

Harvey Tinkle had the wherewithal to hang up his mop and bucket and travel the world. He could have, with less trouble than it took to snap his fingers, walked away from those slick stalls and automatically-flushed urinals and sweet-scented crappers. But he didn't.

At first I couldn't figure it at all. You see, we both worked at Fly Harbor Airport as toilet jockies. Harvey'd been at it for years; I was just kind of scraping up a few bucks before I moved on. I've always liked airports. I don't know, I guess it's that feeling of coming and going all day long. Watching those big babies lift and zoom away to everywhere.

I was there that day when Mrs. Tinkle waddles in with Harv hauling two beat-up suitcases. To visit her sister in Philadelphia. And

why not? With Harv's seniority she was entitled to fly free of charge.

I couldn't believe it when he said, "My old woman ain't ever flew on a plane before. In thirty-five years of marriage she ain't once left the ground." That's what he says in that weird sing-songy voice of his. When I first heard him talk, I thought, jeez, this turkey must have swallowed a canary. There was always a kind of stifled laugh in his voice. You know, like the way people act when your fly is open and everyone knows it but you. But there was a giddiness about him that I liked, even though others pointed to it as the first sign of senility.

Mr. Boswick, for instance. He's the Director of Custodial Services. Boswick keeps whispering in my ear things like: "Jerry, you should be thinking about your future with us. People come and go all the time. The people that stay can move up. We can always use *fresh young blood.*"

Jeez, *fresh young blood* — every time he said that I thought of this Dracula movie I saw when I was a kid. Then I pictured Boswick, a bucket in one hand and cleanser in the other, scrubbing my jugular vein sterile before he attacked.

Anyway, like I say, Harvey didn't have to stay on the job. You see, his old woman never made it to Philadelphia, would you believe it; the damn plane crashed on July third, prematurely lighting up the sky in a huge burst of flame.

I guess it was her fear that convinced her to buy, not one, but three jumbo deluxe life insurance policies from those machines at the airport. On top of that was the fat company policy. It was better than hitting the Big Q at Greyhound Park. Harvey was loaded.

He kept the job to stay busy so he wouldn't linger on the traged right? Wrong. But that's exact. what I thought at first. To tell you the truth, even I began to think the old boy was flipping out. The day after the funeral Harv was back in his white uniform, smiling and whistling. Why that crazy old bastard, I think, he can more easily pass as the Good Humor man than an old-timer who just lost his faithful wife of thirty-five years.

The guy's had a tough break, I figure, so if the strain of it all is flipping him out a little, he's entitled.

"Look Harvey, you take it easy today," I say. "I'll take care of all the cans."

"That's very thoughtful, Jerry," he says, "but I'm rearin' to go."

Would you believe it? He's supposed to be crushed under the weight of personal tragedy. And he says, "I'm rearing to go"! So I clean my five stalls, and he cleans his five.

Harvey and I had given them

names. My favorite was Frank Sinatra — the best baritone flusher in the entire house. Harv liked to think of the long wall of stalls as a stable of spirited thoroughbreds that needed our constant care. His favorite was Whirlaway, a frisky little porcelain filly that galloped away, whooshita, whooshita, when yanked into action.

We had our fun, and why not? A little imagination gives some class to jobs like this. A booking agent and a horse trainer. Big Time, both of us.

"Hey, Harv," I yell from Frank Sinatra, polishing the chrome-plated plumbing, "make sure you give Whirlaway a double portion of oats today. She hasn't had any since you've been gone."

Like always, he shouts back, his voice echoing off the walls, "Sure, Jerry, and you make sure Sinatra's ready for his big concert today, ok?"

And as he goes about his polishing and wiping within the stall, you hear him muttering, "Easy Whirlaway, whoa girl, whoa girl," and then the familiar whooshita, whooshita, followed by the hollow belch of the bowl.

It was a game we played most every day. But that day Harv was spending a lot more time with Whirlaway than usual. On his breaks and shortly after lunch again, he saddles that spunky mare and trots away. What else but the trots when a guy spends that much time on the can? It wasn't the other thing because when I offer to fix him this nifty Prune Juice Cocktail that always does the trick, he laughs and says, "No thanks, Jerry, it's not like that. I just gotta work something out. Gotta big decision to make."

What a jerk I am, I finally figure. When you want top secret privacy at home, where do you go? Right! The can! Poor old Harv was in there with more water streaming from his eyes than two crappers at an open throttle. The smiles, the happiness bit, was just a cover up 'cause he was dying inside!

Wrong again.

He was nestled in the stall for at least twenty minutes when I decide to coax him out and give him the shoulder that he needs. I try to maintain a sense of decorum as I sweep past three executive types and one long-haired dude, all standing at ease pissing into the face of the Inspector Generals. Fortunately, Whirlaway was the last stall. I don't want to embarrass Harv by making a scene, so I pretend to sweep up around the area until the troops file out.

I press my face against the cold metal door. "I understand, Harv. I lost my mother when I was only five. Come on out and we'll talk about it. You'll feel better once you talk about it." Sometimes a slap in the face is very sobering, so for his own good I snap, "Mildred

is gone! You've got to face it! You'll never see her again!" All I hear is the steady dull snap of tissues.

Then, just as I begin to regret my hardline stuff he laughs through the door, "Oh no, Jerry boy, you're wrong this time. I'm on my way to see my beautiful bride." I hear him pulling more tissues. What the hell is he doing?

Oh God, I think, he's gonna kill himself. He's gonna slash his wrists or cut his throat. He really has flipped out!

Then I hear the screeching of metal against metal along with the ffft ffft ffft of tissues being yanked from the dispenser.

My God, the crazy old bastard is cleaning up the mess. A company man right to the very end.

"Hold on Harv! Don't do it! I'll get help!"

"Steady Whirlaway. Whoa, girl, This is the biggest race of our life. We have to do it right the first time."

"Don't do it, Harvey!" I scream as I race to the exit door. I'm halfway out, about to yell for Boswick, when the pipes begin to screech. And the walls begin to echo the faint vibrations of this strange whine, like a dentist, far away, drilling a tooth. I stop in my tracks, confused.

"There, we're ready. Goodbye, Jerry, and thank you," he calls out. "Off and running," he shouts.

The whining sound again, clanking pipes, the whooshita, whooshita of Whirlaway off and running and . . . silence.

So what the hell is going on, I say to myself. I've gotta get to the bottom of this. I lean tentatively against Whirlaway's stall door again:

"Harv, you okay?" I whisper.

Nothing.

"Come on out, Harv."

Nothing.

My God, my God, my God — heart racing, bowels roaring and I'm so frightened now that I begin to wet my pants.

Next thing I know, I'm down on my knees poking my head under the stall door. And then I get two shocks for the price of one: Harvey's size eleven clodhoppers are not there, Harvey is not there, and this big burly 230 pound tackle, with not so much as a limp wrist, taps me on the back and says, "Looking for some action, sweety?"

After I decline — politely — I wait for joy boy to leave and I crawl under the stall door, banging my head against Whirlaway's petrified chest. I plop myself down on Whirlaway and grab my throbbing noggin.

I stand up and look around half expecting to find a scrawled suicide note saying, "Goodbye cruel world." I even look down into the bowl. Then I spot this red, white and blue paper on the floor. Tissue

paper. Just like the single sheets that we load the dispenser with. Only we don't have any fancy tissue like this; just the usual coarse white stuff that Mr. Whipple wouldn't be caught dead squeezing. I see this round hole missing from its corner, about the size of a silver dollar. Damn, it's a miniature American Flag and it's got writing on it that looks like it was done with one of them quills. So I read it:

Happy Birthday, America! This is a Bicentennial Tour Ticket to American History (1941). Follow the simple directions below and relive the glorious past. Touring America Through History. Compliments of The Founding Fathers, Inc.

So I yank another flag from the dispenser to see what the missing hole is. It's a template with neat little perforations all around to make it easy to poke out. It's got a bunch of little tick marks printed around it like a clock. The only numbered mark says 1942. The directions say you're supposed to poke the template from the flag, poke another hole out of the template itself, slip the thing on the flush handle of the toilet, and push it back until it's flat against the valve.

Sure, it's crazy as hell. But Harvey is here two minutes ago and now he's gone.

When I look close at the flush handle I see the thinly etched notch that was supposed to line up with the date on the template. All you had to do was line it up, park your tushy on the bowl, and flush it. And whooshita, whooshita, you jump back over the years like they're hurdles.

That's when Boswick pounds on the door, working on a hot tip from the insulted Tinkerbell tackle. He fires me on the spot for sitting down on the job (which I can understand), and for "degrading the reputation of the Airport facility with cheap, juvenile jokes" (which I can only laugh at because, I think, is this any way to talk about a gift from the Founding Fathers?).

When I report to Boswick's office to pick up my paycheck, he asks me where Harvey is and I tell him Harv is in 1941. Boswick smirks and says, "Good riddance to both of you." He pushes my check across his desk, laughing. "Take your tour tickets with you, too. Now that you have the time, you might want to take a little trip."

"That's not a bad idea, chump, I just might do that." What I'd really like to do is send the creep back to the worst year of the Depression.

So now I've been thinking about this time travel stuff for three weeks, ever since they tossed me in the slammer. You see, somehow or other, Harvey managed to leave one of his fingers behind. It must

have got caught outside of whatever took him back to '41. Boswick found it right after he canned me, and now I'm up for murder. They say I stuffed old Harv, piece by piece, down Whirlaway's throat. I have to admit, it *is* the only reasonable explanation.

So, as I say, I've been thinking about the alternative. It's damn scary, to tell you the truth. I had a nightmare that Harvey blew his own brains out when he found his blushing bride in the arms of another man, after first blowing out the brains of the other guy — who was Harvey, half his age. I had another nightmare where I was swimming around in the dark without any arms or legs, a sperm fish in my old man's testicles. I shivered; I wasn't born until 1943, and the latest ticket I have is for 1942.

But 1942 is beginning to look a lot better than the inside of this place. There's only one problem. I'll have to find a way to break out of this joint before I can do any time traveling — the toilets here have foot-pedal flushers. ●

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FILM

Craig Gardner

A B-plus for Effort

I was not bored for a minute during *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.* Yet, when it was all over —

I had been entertained. But what about plot? How about character motivation? Both, to be kind, evasive.

When we reached the lobby after the film, another member of the *Unearth* theatre party asked me what I thought. My first reaction was that we had just seen the modern equivalent of a 1940's B movie.

I haven't changed my opinion that much since I made that remark. What has occurred to me, however, is that director Steven Spielberg wanted *Close Encounters* to be a B movie all along.

Oh sure, the film has magnificent photography, great special effects, some interesting location work. The $18-million budget had to go for something. But the basics on which *Encounters* is built — its roots, if you must — come straight from "film noir" circa 1947, with Richard Dreyfuss playing the Dick Powell/Alan Ladd part.

Film noir is a term invented by French critics to describe those dark mystery films Hollywood made during the 40's, beginning with *The Maltese Falcon* and including such films as *The Big Sleep; The Blue Gardenia; Murder, My Sweet;* and *The Big Heat.* Literally translated, "film noir" means black film or dark film.

They made dozens of these films, but the best example I can think of is one particularly low budget effort called *D.O.A.* In this film, Edmund O'Brien plays a sort of average Joe who suddenly discovers that an unknown individual has injected him with some Deadly Disease, and he therefore has only a few days to live. He spends the rest of the film tracking down his killer, hoping to find the villain before the disease does him in. No matter how violent or desperate O'Brien gets for the rest of the film, his incredible situation provides "justification" for his acts. This situation also allows O'Brien to run into any number of new locations and characters. His motivation is the sole connecting link.

Okay — now we have *Close Encounters.* In this one, our everyman is Richard Dreyfuss, who, when suddenly confronted by a U.F.O., is suddenly zapped in such a way (never explained) that he realizes he only has a few days to discover its incredible secret. In fact, the idea is imprinted on him so strongly that it becomes the sole reason for living, and thus provides justification for all his future actions, no matter how crazy or desperate. And his journey is just as picaresque as O'Brien's: Dreyfuss drives from Muncie, Indiana to Devil's Mesa in Wyoming in pursuit of the U.F.O.'s, and characters stay only as long as they react directly with Dreyfuss, then disappear.

The parallels go further. One of the major themes of film noir, *D.O.A.* included, is corruption, usually in the form of crooked cops or politicians. *Encounters* has a double-dealing military involved in a vast cover-up. Film noir is full of darkness and claustrophobic symbolism. The climactic sequence in *D.O.A.*, for example, takes place on an aged staircase enclosed by ornate iron bars, the shadows of which constantly fall on O'Brien and his murderer.

Encounters is full of darkness, too. The saucers always come at night, and one of the most effective scenes in the film occurs when the saucers return to the farm house for the small boy and literally begin to take the house apart to get to him. The scene works as well as it does because Spielberg has it take place in darkness.

Encounters director Steven Spielberg is as much a student of old movies as *Star Wars* director George Lucas, and he obviously decided to use the classic elements of film noir to build the frame-

work for his film.

Here's where my cleverly built parallel ends, however, because Spielberg uses more than darkness for symbolism. He also uses light — the searing light that frames Dreyfuss in his first encounter with a U.F.O., the warm, orange light as the boy opens the farmhouse door to the aliens, the brilliant light of the final sequence when the aliens come out of their ship to greet the humans. The brilliant colors of the U.F.O.'s and the giant light board the humans construct to respond to them serve the same function. With these, Spielberg sets up a duality, contrasting the dark (fear, human failings — classic film noir values) with light (a chance to step beyond human frailty to the "promise" of the stars.) *Encounters* has one other symbol, too; the mesa, implanted in the minds of those the U.F.O.'s encounter, a great thrusting object. Signifying escape, perhaps? New possibilities?

At the end of *D.O.A.*, the hero dies. At the end of *Encounters*, the hero goes off in the aliens' ship, theoretically transcending his formerly mundane existence. Both fulfill the destinies set for them early in the films. But *D.O.A.* is a dead end. *Encounters* is a new beginning. Spielberg flips the cinematic coin to create the first "film blanc."

Too bad the substance of the film couldn't be more solid. The real fault lies in the characters; any resemblance between them and real human beings is strictly coincidental. They move through the plot by a combination of chance occurrence and control by Certain Forces Beyond the Ken of Mortal Man. This lack of character development (even less than in *D.O.A.*) leaves a sizeable hole in the middle of the film, and gives us an $18 million B picture.

Yes, yes, there are some beautiful moments in this film. The U.F.O.'s coming around the corner of the road for the first time overwhelmed me. The farmhouse scene is as frightening as anything Steven "Jaws" Spielberg has ever directed. And all that stuff at the end isn't bad, either. It's too bad that the plot can't support them better. It looks like we're going to have to wait a little longer for a satisfying, intelligent sf film.

Curiously, critics seem to be reacting more favorably to *Close Encounters* than they did to *Star Wars.* Both are well-produced Hollywood fare — slick with low-substance quotient. If anything, *Encounters* rates higher on the slick and lower on the substance. So why the raves?

Two reasons, I think: (A) A lot of it takes place on Earth. Critics can relate to social commentary on Muncie, Indiana. And (B), this is their very first experience with a "First Contact" story. I've read

several rapturous mentions of "practically a religious experience" and such stuff concerning the ending of *Close Encounters*. When I made it to the film — well, gang, the special effects sure are nice, but that's about it. Gardner, let's face it, you're just a jaded old sf fan. All these newcomers out there are getting that same "sense of wonder" rush you had when you got hooked on this junk. Now, if we could only get all these neophytes to read *Childhood's End*...

Variety recently reported that *Close Encounters* has already made $24 million, with $20 million more promised. The studio is predicting the film will outgross *Star Wars*.

Frankly, I don't think so. I don't believe *Encounters* could stand up to repeated viewings the way *Star Wars* does, and it's those repeated viewings that bring in the big box office receipts. The reason *Encounters* is doing so well so fast is that *Star Wars* created the market for them (a new sf film audience!), and then the studio "block-booked" *Encounters* (opened it at a humber of theatres simultaneously) to feed off the initial excitement as much as possible.

When it goes, *Encounters* will fade fast. Twenty years from now, audiences will still get a kick from *Star Wars,* much like audiences like old Errol Flynn movies today. I don't think *Encounters* will wear anywhere near as well. But then again, I'm the guy with the jaded sense of wonder, so what do I know?

There really is a new audience for science fiction films. I got some proof positive of this about a month ago when I went to a crowded suburban theatre (on a weeknight, no less) to see something called *Starship Invasions*.

This movie, which (unfortunately for them) stars Robert Vaughn and Christopher Lee, is one of the most inept pieces of filmmaking I've ever seen. The story concerns flying pieplates and some sort of ray that makes everybody suicidal. It's supposed to be occasionally amusing, but the filmmakers never seem too sure when.

You need a film like this every once in a while to remember how bad movies can be. I just hope we don't get many more of them, or our brand new sf film audience will disappear.

Fantastic film book dept.: Jeff Rovin has written a book on the model animation work of Ray Harryhausen and Willis O'Brien, called *From The Land Beyond Beyond* (Berkley Windhover — $5.95) and, for the most part, it's an interesting, entertaining job. Rovin discusses how many of the special effects used by the two ani-

mators were created, and summarizes the plot of each film with numerous stills, both composite pictures issued by the studios and shots of Harryhausen's models in his workshop. He also briefly discusses the careers of the two animators before, after, and between different projects, including some films planned but never made. At book's end, I was left wanting to see most of O'Brien and Harryhausen's movies all over again.

The book's one fault is that Rovin tries to make it too complete. His breezy overview of the two animators' work is prefaced and followed by two short chapters in which he attempts to cover the entire history of model animation! This simply can't be done, and Rovin completely neglects Ladislas Starevitch, a contemporary of Willis O'Brien who made dozens of "puppet animation" films in Europe, nor does he mention the fact that Max Fleischer, the creator of Popeye and Betty Boop, also made model animation cartoons during the '30s (one, featuring a pair of nauseatingly cute mice and a gang of killer oysters, is one of the funniest things I've ever seen). In his review of recent animation, he covers a great number of animators and films in just a few pages, some just by mention in a picture caption. Another whole book could be written on these other model animators, and I hope Rovin or somebody else will do it.●

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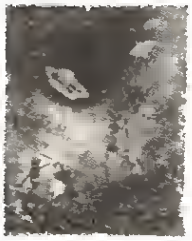

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Damon Knight

He is, almost indisputably, the single most important figure in modern American science fiction. He has done virtually everything there is to do in the field, and he has excelled in each area: as writer (novels such as **A For Anything***), anthologist (classics like* **A Science Fiction Argosy***), as critic (***In Search of Wonder***), as editor (the* **Orbit** *series), as translator (bringing French sf to English-speaking audiences), and as organizer (the Science Fiction Writers of America and the Milford Conferences). His influence pervades every branch of the genre.*

Here is where it all started, almost four decades ago: "Resilience," Damon Knight's first professional sale.

Damon Knight

About "Resilience":

It occurred to me very early that I could probably write stories; I told my father I could, when I was about ten, "because I knew all the words." It turned out, a few years later, that I could start stories, but as I had no idea where they were going, I could never finish them. I gave up in bafflement for a year or two; "Resilience," written when I was seventeen, was, I think, the second or third story that I actually managed to finish. I sent it hopefully to Robert W. Lowndes, who was acting as agent for a few young writers, and after a month or two he let me know that Donald A. Wollheim was starting a new magazine and would like me to donate "Resilience" to it — he had no editorial budget and had to get all his stories for nothing. Naturally I did not hesitate. The story appeared in the first issue of *Stirring Science Stories* in the winter of 1940, when I was an art student in Salem, Oregon. The printers had changed "Brittle People" to "Little People" in the first sentence, making the story incomprehensible to anyone but me, but I didn't care; having the story in print on actual paper was glory enough.

On the strength of this story and a fan magazine called *Snide,* I was invited by the Futurians to come and share one of their communal apartments in New York in 1941. From this followed everything of interest that has happened to me since. (See *The Futurians,* John Day, 1977.) I suppose that even if I had never written this story, I would have got out of adolescence somehow, but because of the way it happened, I associate "Resilience" with my escape from everything I disliked about my life as a teen-ager: kalsomined walls, unraveling sweaters, colds in the nose, sprained ankles, algebra. "Resilience" has been decently buried for nearly forty years, and I exhume it here only because it may give courage to some young writer who senses that he or she is writing as clumsily now as I did then. Everybody has to start somewhere.

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Resilience

"It was here that the Brittle People made their last stand," said the conductor of the rubberneck bus, looking boredly at the stone ruins. His audience yawned, craned, or just goggled, after the manner of sightseers everywhere.

"Their high-powered projectiles were at this time inflicting some damage," the conductor went on, in a monotone, "so the Army of Conquest, under General Drlnac, retired and starved them out. Their almost incredibly delicate bodies were preserved in the Tzino Museum."

He yawned.

"Bah!" said the General of the Little Men, scowling at his aides. His antennae quivered fiercely. "This is no time for sentimentality! Whether or not this world is inhabited, we shall take it over for the use of our expanding race.

"Besides," he went on, looking up at the deserted barn beside which the Little Army stood, "this structure convinces me that we have to deal with a very low order of mentality. We can expect no great resistance."

He turned. "Onward—march!"

Their metal caps flashing above the dandelion tops, the Little Men moved on.

"Oh, look!" said the girl, pointing excitedly. Metal caps gleamed across the road from their car. "Jim, what are they? Why, there are hundreds of them!"

"Huh? Where?" asked Jim, wiping lipstick off his cheek. "Oh! Well — I'll — be — damned!"

"What are they?" asked the girl, again.

"Elves, or — or gnomes, or something," he said, dazedly. "But there just aren't any of those — I mean, we must be dreaming or something."

"Little, tiny men in sky-blue coats," she said. "It's just like a fairy-tale! See, they even have 'feelers.'

"Jim, I'm afraid," she ended, unreasonably.

He laughed. "What of — them?"

"But they're pointing something at us," she said.

It was true. The foremost of the Little Men were aiming tiny, bright tubes at the couple.

Then they turned abruptly around and started off down the road.

"I think they're funny," said Jim, as the last of the column passed. "They look so — so serious and determined. Let's follow them." He pressed the starter.

Then things began to happen. Instead of the powerful, contented purr usually associated with the

pressing of that button, there came a series of loud clanks, ending in a louder crash, from the hood of the car.

The boy and girl looked at each other.

"What —" began the girl.

Then the car seemed to shake itself, gave a lurch and settled wearily.

"Earthquake!" yelled Jim, jumping to conclusions. "Let's get out of here!" He opened the door and leaped out, pulling the girl with him.

Outside, he stopped suddenly and looked down at his hand with a puzzled air. In it was the plastic handle of the door. The rest of the door was a pile of rusty dust scattered between him and the car.

Then, as they watched, the metal body of the car ran away in little streams, leaving the upholstery and the plastic windows and fittings lying in a pile of the same dust.

The two looked at each other in silence.

"So help me God," muttered Traffic Officer Koehler, as he threaded his way among the jammed cars, "if another of them women has tried to make a U-turn at that corner, I'll tear off my badge, and then I'll take her by the hair and yank her out of her car — and I'll get at least twenty years, but it'll be worth it."

Then he stopped short and stared speechlessly ahead of him. Between two cars came the cause of the jam; a string of little men in sky-blue coats and metal caps, swinging tiny tubes back and forth at the cars and buildings around.

The foremost of the Little Men calmly rayed Officer Koehler, and started to pass on. Koehler, however, came to his official self with a start, and made a grab for him.

As his fingers closed about the mite's body, he was horrified to feel it bend inward like a piece of rubber. He let go hastily. Then he dazedly watched the Little Man's belly snap back into place, also like rubber. He marched on, as if nothing had happened.

A few seconds later, Officer Koehler failed to notice that his metal suspender clasps had given way, on account of the fact that a street-full of cars and a number of buildings were falling at the same time as his trousers.

"Is that them?" asked one of the soldiers incredulously, looking through the bushes at the column of little figures.

"Yep," whispered another. "They have some kinda ray that makes your gun fall to pieces. That's why we gotta ambush 'em."

"Ready," came the command. "Aim . . . Fire!"

The rifles barked.

"Hell," said a soldier, clearly. "We only got five!"

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"They're too damn small," another replied. "Whadda they think we are, Dead-eye Dicks?"

The surviving Little Men swiftly scattered out and fell flat, raying the bushes. The next volley got none of them.

As their guns fell to dust and the Little Men marched on past them, a soldier said, disgustedly, "Hell, we shoulda used fly-swatters."

"As I understand it," said Professor Ferrin, "the — ah — invaders employ a ray which induces what is known as 'fatigue' in metals, making them lose their molecular cohesion. If it were not for that, our militia would no doubt have been able to pick them off from ambush, but, you see, they are so very small that it is — ah — extremely difficult to hit one. Machine guns are no good, either, because they can get behind little rocks and into tiny holes.

"But they have no actually destructive weapon, so it should be quite simple to merely — ah — swat them," he finished. "That is why we civilians have been asked to volunteer."

"Wot abart the ruddy militia?" asked Hemingway, the tobacconist. "W'y carn't they swot 'em?"

"Well, as I understand it," said the professor, "the militia have so much metal about them, you know — buttons and belt-buckles, and so forth — that it's simpler just to turn the thing over to the — ah — civilians than to remove it all. There's really no danger at all, of course."

"Ah," said Hemingway, doubtfully.

"Here they come!" came the word along the line.

The Little Men marched into view, scattered out now, and with ray-tubes at the ready.

"Up and at 'em!"

Armed with baseball bats, pokers, and clubs, the civilian volunteers rushed the Little Men.

"There, you rascal!" panted Professor Ferrin, as he smote the foremost with his club.

Then he halted and stared. Where a bloody pulp, or at least a lifeless body, ought to have been, was an unharmed Little Man, calmly marching onward.

Taking a firmer grip, the professor followed him and smote him again. This time he distinctly saw the Little Man telescope under the blow and then pop up again.

"Amazing!" he breathed, a scientific gleam in his eye.

This time he hit the Little Man horizontally. Again he conducted himself like a rubber ball; bending with the blow, then snapping back out again. He picked himself up, apparently unhurt, and went ahead without a backward glance.

"Amazing!" the professor said again.

The Little Men marched on. ●

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She had given her children to the stars. Now her sanity depended on seeing what was left to her.

Of Wyli Born

by Laura E. Campbell

The sea was grey and still, mist enshrouded, empty. A small figure with thin arms and a body round and oddly lumpy under her loose dress stood at the edge of the water. She ignored the nightcallers as they swooped above her and cried their farewells to one another before they fled from the dusky morning light. Her eyes and her soul were focused on the rough stone house as she waited, hoping against hope, that somehow this last child, this eighth child, would not really leave her. That what had happened so many times before would not happen again.

Eight children, she cried in her mind! Eight children raised in this still place, a land barren but for the patches of reeds which broke the endless sand dunes, and the now quiet grey stone house sitting above the sea. No one and no thing

existed nearby except for the nightcallers and the silent sea creatures. And the ever listening Ear! But she had raised those children as she had agreed to: strong, straight. And far-seeing.

Four picked Men had come for eight brief arranged meetings, for she had been unable to accept artificial means. Eight beautiful children, then, according to specifications. And, wondrously, all eight with the talent they had been bred for. Her duty, her life, her gift to Man.

Through the mist she saw the door to the house open and a girl emerge. A slim, graceful girl, with the dark hair of her father and a lithe body just showing the early signs of her own coming womanhood through her fine woven tunic. She did not look at her mother or the sea, but kept her eyes to the still fogged sky. The woman did not go to the girl. She knew the child was conversing with someone too far away for her poor eyes to see; her own flesh would have no ears for her. The morning marked a beginning for the child, a finish, a completion for the woman.

The woman waited at the water's edge, thought and emotion held within so tightly the tendons in her neck stood out. Faintly, then growing steadily, the rumble of an approaching air ship threatened to shake her control. The machine finally emerged from the mist and settled at the apex of a triangle formed with the woman and the girl, throwing sand and shells into the air as it touched the ground. The child did not move, but a look of joy lit her face. She turned toward the ship in the same manner the blind will face an awaited guest, restrained, almost uncertain, but expectantly aware.

Two Men came out of the vehicle — tall, confident Men. One, the slighter and a hybrid by birth, although a Man by inclination, walked to the girl. He spoke no words aloud, but the woman knew worlds passed between them.

The nightcallers had gone. The air ship had been shut off. There was no sound but the quiet lap-lap of the water and the crunch of boots across dry sand as the other, a true Man, came toward her. She wanted to run, but her duty had not yet been discharged. She would not go to him, though. She simply waited while he completed his paced, unhurried approach.

Mother did not see me, of course, as I hid in the reeds near her. I could tell she hurt so terribly inside, although she stood so quietly. Not even a breeze bothered to flutter her dress. I wanted to go to her and help her, but that was impossible, of course.

Sandiera was ready and waiting at the doorway. She did not see me either, but then she would not have acknowledged me if she had. That,

at least, was one thing right and proper on this dreadful morning.

I could feel all the way through Mother, she was so strong in emotion. Had she not been wyli born, how might she have torn into these strange Men who came, killing them both with only her hands for daring to come and take her child. But she did not. She simply waited for them.

"Mornin'," I heard the Man say in a voice so heavy my stunted aeroate structures vibrated. I crouched lower, making sure he could not find me with his eyes.

Mother nodded. She did not speak often, there being little need among us.

"I'm supposed to give you a small speech," the Man began. Was he sensitive enough to realize what was going on before him? Would it matter to him? "To thank you for your valiant and unswerving service to Mankind..."

"Do not, please," answered Mother, almost in a whisper as she glanced at him. But it was Sandiera she watched. Sandiera and the more distant Man who greeted one another as if they had known each other long ago and well, and once again had met. It was always that way. They all seemed to regard these strangers as something closer to them than their own family. So odd. So sad.

The Man near us looked at my sister and his own companion and then back at Mother. He nodded too, to himself.

'Well, I have to give you these papers anyway. They officially end your service. There's one here honoring you for producing eight far-seers. Eight! More than...."

Mother shook her head as if it hurt and raised a hand as if to ward off his words. "Please!" I myself would have rid her of these Men and her pain if there had been any way. Any way at all.

He stopped. He seemed uncomfortable, but he had his own duty to carry out. I could feel the indecision in him, although I could not usually feel through true Men. "Well, take the papers. You're free now, to do whatever you like. Go home, stay here...."

He must have thought Mother looked at him questioningly, though when she looked his way her thoughts made no change that I could feel. "Yes, you can stay here," he said quickly. "This place isn't needed anymore. There are plenty of far-seers right now, and it may be they themselves can breed. You can have the house if you like."

Mother was no longer paying attention to him, so he followed her gaze back across the sand to the other Man and Sandiera. They were walking to the ship, slowly, still in deep silent conversation. Sandiera was too far away to sense directly, but there was no sadness in the way she moved.

"If there is anything you need, or wish...."

Mother moved her head slightly, but did not look at him. "No. No."

He shifted his weight and seemed to want to say more, but he never found the words. So, as Mother and I watched Sandiera approach the ship which would take her away from us, he himself marched back to the machine.

My sister was already lost in her new world. She walked to the air ship as the others had, drawn on by something we would never know. Each of them had gone with no thought to those of us remaining. But Mother waited. I waited. The still sea and the world waited with us while Sandiera left. Then suddenly, so surprisingly, she stopped. She pulled her attention from the ship and the Men and turned to Mother. She waved across an already immense distance. Once. The sun, now shining stronger through the lifting fog, seemed to light up something on Sandiera's cheek for just a moment. I wanted to stand up and wave back at her, but I crouched, tears running down my own face. Was I crying for Mother, or Sandiera, or even for myself? The door to the ship closed and she was gone then. Irretrievably and forever.

The woman did not move for a long time after the ship left. The air became brighter, the mist higher and breaking apart, but she did not notice. The days had always followed the same endless pattern, except for these spaced, terrible ones, each of which ripped a part of her from herself. Eight children were gone now. Eight children, born, loved, and gone!

She had arrived on this sterile, empty beach, not knowing what it would come to mean for her. She had willingly left her rugged mountain home and her peaceful, loving people to mate with Men in order to produce the far-seers Men seemed to want so badly for their star ships. And all the children, all eight she had borne, had been just what they had been bred to be.

Man had sought, and from her Man had gotten, the human/wyli hybrids who possessed not only the intelligence necessary to master the machinery that ran the monster ships, but who also had that strange ability to link minds with one another and help to ease the overwhelmingly empty feelings of deep space. More importantly, these outcrosses of humans with strong genes and an extra, seeking sensitivity, and wylis with their intuitive flying sense and a subtle collective awareness, produced beings able to cope with the movements and effects of massive heavenly bodies in a way that complemented computer calculations as no mere human could.

These hybrids were not an abso-

lute necessity for deep space travel. But when the special human/wyli crosses were discovered, with their non-flying, slight, but human-looking form, and their unique talents, Man was not willing to settle for less. The hybrids were not only better pilots, but also had a much longer productive life. The economics were better using the hybrids, so female wylis were required to mate with Men and raise these children, with great honor going to the families who would allow their daughters to aid Man in this way.

So she had come, for honor is a precious thing among the wylis, and then, too soon, it was done. The children contracted for had been conceived, and raised, and then every one, most horribly, had been claimed. And since she was wyli, the existence of an agreement disallowed protest.

But eight times! Eight lost children, from eight arranged meetings, each so necessarily brief and formal. And the one, secret time, sweet, prolonged, and loving. Eight children, raised and gone, a whole life, finished and done, leaving a hollow shell, a being with no use and no purpose any longer. So many, many years of caring for and living with her children, with the ever-listening, Man-directed Ear somehow always there, always waiting for that first quick sparkle of far-seeing. She did not know how Man managed to listen for such a thing over such a distance as it was to their base, but if there was anything she hated and resented, it was the Ear. Now once more it had signaled Man, and once more they had shown up to claim another child, early and young, before the talent had a chance to grow in unfathomable and unwanted directions.

And suddenly the Ear was gone, the children were gone, and she was left with ... a house! A house and a terrible, aching pain.

Mother stood for a terrible, long time, not moving, hardly breathing. I wanted to help her, but too many years of hard-won habit would not let me. Besides, even with them gone, she did not turn to me. Had the forced practice become a part of her, no longer a conscious act?

For her it had been so many years of leaving me food as if it were just a forgotten plate; of leaving me a blanket at the foot of her bed as if it were simply put there in case she might need it during the night; or leaving clothes out as if they were to be mended, or washed, or even discarded.

Had she finally forced her mind to really forget me? Me, her only love-child, the result of an uncontracted for, chance encounter with a Man. Had her plan to protect me from the listening Ear by never acknowledging my existence finally become a ritual with no meaning?

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I existed because I feel Mother all the way through, most of the time. I could feel the love that she could never allow herself to consider consciously. She did not know, I did not know, what the Men would do if they ever found me. She had only been told that she must *never* mate with Men who had not been authorized. She had accepted the limitation without question when she had agreed to the contract. But love with a wyli comes infrequently, and then with overpowering strength.

When Mother discovered a downed and lost small-craft pilot on the beach, she had brought him back to the house. She had healed his broken body and had come to know him as she had never known another Man. She had learned of gentleness, and caring, and, finally, love. Then his craft had been found, he was discovered at the house, and the other Men had come to take him away. Mother had been thanked and that must have been all as far as the other Men were concerned, for she heard nothing more about it.

But Mother had broken her agreement. She could not give me up, though, for that would have meant giving up the memory of her one lover. So she had had me in secret, and to protect me had decided she must learn to ignore me. But with love. A difficult, demanding task. Her other children, my sisters and brothers, knowing no differently, and perhaps even sensing her need, followed suit. I could not exist, although I must.

And finally, finally, it had come to this. No Ear, none of the eight left, but still she did not acknowledge me. "Mother!" I called in my mind, although she never before had allowed herself to answer what she might have sensed from me. "Mother."

Suddenly she threw herself on the sand, ripping her clothes, crying, sobbing. She thrashed and she screamed. Terrible fear seized me. Had her mind become undone? Had the strain of loss, of even caring for me, finally become too much? I ran out of my hiding place and stood near her head. "Mother!" I cried in a voice so loud, but so completely inadequate. "Mother, it is I, your last child. Mother!"

She looked up once. She looked around for a brief moment, but she did not see me standing right by her! She did not see me, and went back to her own overwhelming pain.

The agony of the end of her dreams and her love became too much for the woman. She crumbled. She fell on the sand and let all of the aching thoughts filling her mind take over her body. She screamed and rolled, and, once, thought a small child's voice called her. But there was no one there. No one. Nothing.

In the throes of her pain she began ripping off her garments. Bands wrapped her body and she tore at those too until, suddenly, what they had enfolded came unbound. Wings, weak and uncontrollable, extended and shook into the sand. Bewildered, she stopped thrashing and tried to rise, but the wings unbalanced her. They began moving of their own accord as old memories in the tissues themselves took over, and soon they were flapping the brightening morning air, building strength, finding life. Harder and harder they beat, until she began slowly to leave the ground.

Stroke, beat, they struggled to get her airborne, although she hardly knew what was happening. Then, all at once, she realized what had returned to her. She gathered herself and fought for control over the long unused appendages. She gradually began to command what they did. She dropped suddenly, missing rhythm, and caught herself. Then she dropped purposefully and rose once more. She forced herself higher and higher, spiraling, fighting to find the vague air currents of the flat land and sea. Far above the beach, the sun and currents told her the direction memories sought. Further up she flew, and then finally she turned inland. On the beach she left a small crippled creature, crying out.

Mother went away! She found her wings, those strange lumpy things on her back which I had thought just like mine, useless and deformed. But they had only been bound with thin soft straps, which in her struggles with her own demons she had ripped apart. They took her over for a while. I could feel her confusion. But then she and her body remembered the same motions together and she took over her wings. Why didn't the Men let her fly when she was a Mother? Why was it necessary to keep her earthbound in such a desolate place? If Mother knew, she didn't remember.

But something came back to her then. I could feel her wonder and then her joy. Higher and higher she went, a place called Home calling her, a place of mountains and wind. A place where flying was easy and natural, so different from our flat, still beach where only the nightcallers used the air. I could feel her unfolding in her flight. Beautifully, layer after layer. A new emergence, perhaps an old returning. My body cried to go after hers, my mind stretching, trying to follow her mind as she went further and further away. And then she was gone.

I was so empty. I had never been empty before. Always her thoughts had been there around me, and the shadow thoughts of my sisters and brothers. But then there was nothing. A single speck in the cleared sky and then nothing.

I sat for so long. So long, although the sun barely moved, marking off a boundless eternity, piece by minute piece. I sat, trying to find myself in the dreadful hollowness inside. I was so lost in those echoing halls that I did not realize the sky once more contained an object. Ship or Man, beast or wyli — I had no knowledge of the thing descending over me. Suddenly, suddenly, the sand around me swirled under the beating of huge wings, and I was scooped into thin, but strong arms. Mother held me to her breast as I had never before been held. She stroked my face as she carried me aloft, cooing almost silently to me. Her touch was gentle and sweet, as I knew it would be, her tears so lovely in the sun and wind. The thoughts I opened to, so warm, so deep, so full of the joy of long awaited and suddenly allowable expression. She hugged me close and said her first words to me, "We are going Home, child of mine. We are going Home together." ●

In November:

Three First Sales

ABOUT THE ARTIST

All the interior art in this issue, as well as the cover, was done by Clyde Caldwell. Clyde's work is already familiar to UNEARTH's readers, through his illustration for "McPeter's, Intergalactic Circus" in issue #4, and his cover and interior for "Conjugal Rites" in #5.

He has been contributing illustrations to sf/fantasy magazines and comic books for the past six years. He recently finished work on a limited edition fantasy print, "The Season of the Witch," the first of several print and portfolio projects he has been given commissions for.

Clyde currently works full-time as a free-lance illustrator. He lives just outside Charlotte, North Carolina with his wife Susan and his daughter Kelly.

The UNEARTH Story Contest

Write A Story With Harlan Ellison!

UNEARTH is sponsoring a contest that gives previously unpublished writers (those who have never sold fiction to a professional sf magazine or anthology) the opportunity to collaborate on stories with Harlan Ellison. The contest is divided into two parts, each of which will have three winners. Entrants may choose either or both categories, and may enter as often as they like.

The first part is based on the story beginning contributed by Harlan Ellison, which appears in UNEARTH #5, the First Anniversary Issue (available for $1.50, plus 50 cents postage). Entrants will complete the story, adding no more than 5000 words.

In the second category, contestants will supply the first 250-350 words of a story. Mr. Ellison will finish the three he judges to be best.

The six winning stories will be published, with collaboration bylines, in future issues of UNEARTH. All winning entrants will be paid as sole contributors, at UNEARTH's current rate.

In addition, the best entry in the first category will receive a cash bonus of $100. Winners from the second category will be copyrighted in Mr. Ellison's name, and will be re-marketed by him, with 10% of the sale price from the first reprinting going to the collaborators.

For further details, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to UNEARTH, 102 Charles St., #190, Boston, MA 02114, marked Attention: Story Contest.

BOOKS

Celeste Bockma

Craig Gardner

Gordon Powers

The Visible Man, by Gardner Dozois. Berkeley Medallion, 312 pp., $1.75
All My Sins Remembered, by Joe Haldeman. St. Martin's Press, 184 pp., $7.95.

Gardner Dozois' writing has been appearing since the early 1970's in magazines and anthologies such as *New Dimensions, Orbit, Universe,* and *Analog,* and yet he is not generally known among readers of science fiction. He should be. In fact, Dozois should be read by anyone who values skillful, imaginative storytelling and carefully-wrought language, especially when these are found in combination with original and startling perspectives.

The Visible Man is the first collection of Dozois' stories to be published; it served as my own introduction to his writing, and I urge you to discover him for yourself in the twelve brilliant stories that make up this collection.

I'll warn you now that you won't find much in the way of intergalactic travel, scientific extrapolation, or other standard science fiction fare in these stories. What you will find is a subtle yet intense probing of the dark side of existence. Dozois depicts worlds in which no one would want to live,

and he does it by using language to paint a sharp-edged, horror-filled, almost tangible reality. As I read, I frequently found myself gasping in sudden recognition at the feel, sight, sound, smell, and taste of the world he describes, only to recoil at the sinister perspectives he suddenly reveals.

"The Visible Man," the short story from which the book takes its title, is the first story in the volume and one of the best. It operates on a chilling premise about how crime will be punished in the future, when the criminal is conditioned not to 'see' any other living creature and thus is sentenced to live in a world of ghosts. Dozois makes the most of the possibilities inherent in this clever idea and delivers a one-two punch at the end by revealing the even more chilling context of the punishment. To say more would spoil your own experience of the story. Once you have read it, though, go back and read it again to see how subtly the clues to the ending are built into the action. (This kind of rereading will pay off with most of Dozois' stories.)

There isn't room to mention every story in *The Visible Man;* I will mention a few of my favorites, however. Some of the best writing you will ever see anywhere is in "The Last Day of July," the story of a man who becomes a ghost and sinks right out of this world into — somewhere else. Some of the best storytelling you will ever see anywhere is in "A Special Kind of Morning," in which an old soldier recounts his part in one of the most horrific battles you will ever hear described. All of these stories are first-rate, all of them thought-provoking, all worth reading and rereading.

In *All My Sins Remembered,* Joe Haldeman carries on the exploration of war, aggression, and violence that he has been engaged in ever since *The Forever War.* The three major episodes of the book have appeared elsewhere in different form: "To Fit the Crime" and "The Only War We've Got" in *Galaxy* magazine, and "All My Sins Remembered" in *Cosmos* magazine.

What holds these episodes together as a novel is the main character, Otto McGavin, an Anglo-Buddhist who applies for a job with the Galactic Confederacion, idealistically wanting to protect the rights of humans and nonhumans. He finds that, after two years under deep hypnosis, he has become a trained killer and undercover agent, able to assume through plastiflesh alteration and personality overlay the shape and identity of an evil prelate, an amoral swordsman, or anyone else who is in the middle of a situation that could erupt into interplanetary war or exploitation of a life form.

McGavin's pacific, Buddhist personality is repressed throughout

his long and bloody career as a prime operator; it only re-emerges between assignments and upon retirement, when he remembers all the things that he has done. This situation promises some very interesting conflicts. Especially nice is the question of whether McGavin can justify to himself the murdering and maiming of living beings in a cause which he considers to be just. Also, if his actions have been sins, whose sins are they? And what about free will?

But although Haldeman does not develop these issues as much as I would have liked, there is enough of interest in his premise and action in his fast-paced, lean prose to make *All My Sins Remembered* very good reading indeed.

— *Celeste Bockma*

First World Fantasy Awards, edited by Gahan Wilson. 310 p. plus four page insert of illustrations by Lee Brown Coye. Doubleday, $8.95.

Queens Walk in the Dusk, by Thomas Burnett Swann. Illustrated by Jeff Jones, 139 pages, Heritage Press, $16.00.

Moondust, by Thomas Burnett Swann. 158 p., Ace, $1.50.

The King in Yellow, by Robert W. Chambers. 274 p., Ace, $1.50.

What is fantasy, anyways?

In the broader sense, it contains all of speculative fiction. Tolkien, Lovecraft, Niven, Ballard, Vonnegut, Kotzwinkle: all of them write fantasy.

"Fantasy," of course, is also applied to certain rather narrowly defined sub-genres within the greater field. Most of these come with adjectives: heroic fantasy, weird fantasy, epic fantasy, historic fantasy. All of these branches have (along with that other sub-genre, science fiction) grown tremendously in recent years, but critical acceptance, and the accompanying financial reward, seems to lag behind in the sf community.

So came to pass *The First World Fantasy Awards,* given (strangely enough) at the First World Fantasy Convention in Providence, R.I., home of H.P. Lovecraft. Appropriately enough to the setting, weird fantasy by far predominates in the Doubleday collection — about 90% of the book is concerned with horror of one sort or another. Some good stuff, too. Selections from Robert Bloch (life achievement award), Manly Wade Wellman (best collection), and the semi-professional magazine *Whispers* (best non-professional). A very effective story by Robert Aikman (my respect for the man grows and grows), "Notes from a Young Girl's Diary," won the best short fiction award. The three runners-up are also included here. None of them are slouches, and one of them, "Sticks" by Karl

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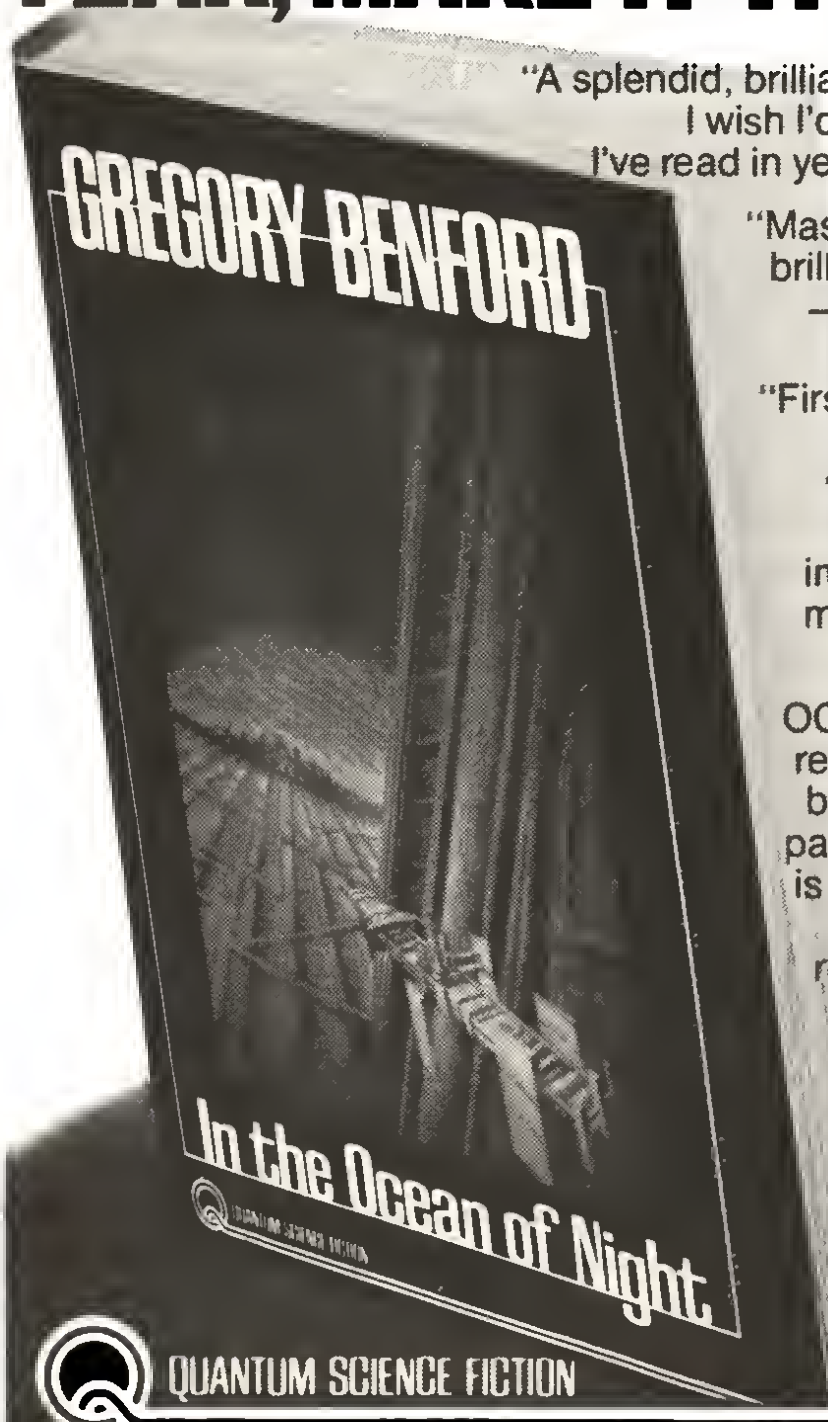

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"Masterful. Powerful plotting, brilliant characterization."
—*Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*

"First-rate."
—*Publishers Weekly*

"Well-told and difficult to put down, it rouses the imagination and lingers in memory."—Roger Zelazny

"Stunning...IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT offers a realistic picture of a possible future against which a parable of man's existence is enacted that shows why science fiction is worth reading."
—*Washington Post*

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Edward Wagner, also won the British Fantasy Award.

The only non-horror pieces in the book are a selection from the winning novel, "The Forgotten Beasts of Eld" by Patricia A. McKillip, a nicely-done epic fantasy a la Tolkien and Lewis, and "A Father's Tale" by Sterling E. Lanier, a short-fiction runner-up which is an actual, honest-to-god Lost Race story in the manner of H. Rider Haggard and company.

The book also features a selection of drawings from award-winning artist Lee Brown Coye, nicely placed next to Wagner's "Sticks," a story inspired by those drawings. *First World Fantasy Awards* also features some interesting background material by editor Gahan Wilson on the award winners, the genesis of the awards, and H.P. Lovecraft's Providence. They've also reprinted the acceptance speech of a frustrated stand-up comedian named Robert Bloch. Overall, an enjoyable collection, and one that would serve as a good introduction to the horror field. Only one corner of fantasy, perhaps, but a deserving one.

Thomas Burnett Swann wrote a very special type of fantasy. His novels take their backgrounds from history, most often the time of the ancient Greeks. People and mythical creatures freely intermingle in all his books, and his writing overflows with warm characterizations and a dry wit.

Queens Walk in the Dusk is the last book Swann wrote before his death. Its characters come from the *Aeneid* — the survivors of Troy and Dido, queen of Carthage — but Swann uses them to tell a more personal story, which also features one Ianthus, a very nicely realized king of the elephants (!). *Queens* is a short novel which manages to be slight and beautiful at the same time.

The book has been released in an attractive numbered hardcover edition of 2000 copies by Heritage Press (P.O. Box 721, Forest Park, GA 30050) with accompanying illustrations by Jeff Jones, many of them tipped-in, and afterwords on Swann and Jones by Gerald W. Page. This is Heritage's first release, and it's obvious that a lot of love on the part of author, illustrator and publisher went into producing this volume. If you're a fan of Swann, Jones or just good book production, this book is well worth the price.

Both Ace and DAW Books have a number of Swann titles in paperback. *Moondust,* just reissued by Ace, takes place in Jericho, with Joshua waiting just off-stage, features a lost race of beautiful women with wings, and has a nicely gripping climax. And if you're not ready to lay down 16 big ones for a quality hardcover, it's a good introduction to Swann.

— Craig Gardner

Celestial Passengers, by Margaret Sachs with Ernest Jahn. Penguin Books, 220 pages, $2.95.
Rocketship, by Robert Malone with J. C. Suares. Harper and Row, 125 pages, $6.95.
Strange Glory, edited by Gerry Goldberg. St. Martin's Press, 151 pages, $10.95 cloth; $5.95 paperback.

The National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena is a serious organization devoted to the study of U.F.O.'s and other related matters. Ernie Jahns, one of their premier investigators, adds an air of credibility to this book but, once again, it is old hat to those who follow this sort of thing.

A sample of interesting oddities (tektites, angel hair) and a discussion of government and public attitudes towards U.F.O.'s are both thoughtful; however, the section on the possibilities of interstellar migration is simply silly. By far the best aspect of the book is the selection of Johnny Hart's "B.C." comics which deal with space visitors.

Next is a book which deserves a place beside your *Star Trek Star Fleet Technical Manual.* In simple-minded fashion, *Rocketship* attempts to illustrate how yesterday's science fiction becomes today's science fact. It is heavy on pictures and short on thought. The history of rocketry is both sketchy and incomplete and, for the most part, it is devoted to NASA promotion shots embellished with rather turgid prose.

A great deal of fuss is made over the manner in which writers like Jules Verne predicted modern day technology, but many of the specific illustrations used are unconvincing. The fact that one of the longest chapters is devoted to space fashions may give some indication as to the author's interests.

Strange Glory is far and away the best of the lot. Originally published in Canada in 1975, it is just getting a well deserved release in the United States. Gerry Goldberg is a bit of a mystic, and the underlying theme in this collection is "cosmic heroism" — man's quest to realize his potential.

Each of the book's five sections — despair, liberation, creativity, New Jerusalem and Godhead — opens with a Zen Buddhist parable depicting a step on the inward journey. A variety of writers and thinkers express themselves in a dozen different voices. What voices! Norman Spinrad, Roger Zelazny and Harlan Ellison are just a few of the short story writers offered. There is poetry from Whitman, Yeats and Kogawa and essays by E. B. White, Aldous Huxley and many other notables. The whole affair is embellished with a number of grim reaper/frolicking troll illustrations by Virgil Finlay and Stephen Fabian. ●

— Gordon Powers

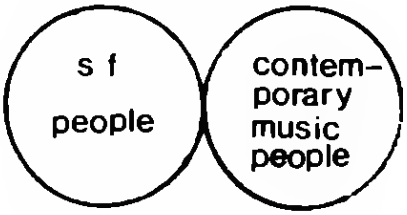
FOCUS

Music in SF

Somtow Sucharitkul

When I was thirteen, I was shipped off to a funny school in England where everyone has to wear tails to classes. In those days, the New Math had not yet become the fashionable *bete noire* that it is today, and I felt quite honoured to be selected as one of its first guinea-pigs: to be one of the first to know that multiplication and trigonometry were now obsolete, and were about to be replaced by soul-searching analyses of the Meaning of Number, and by those transcendently complexified re-namings of the obvious, Sets and Venn Diagrams

I have learned but one thing from this heady experience: that if you try to draw the intersection of the set of science fiction people



and the set of contemporary music people, it makes for a very dull Venn Diagram indeed. As can be seen, it resembles nothing so much as a pair of eyeglasses ... which brings us to the subject at hand.

Future Music is becoming a recurrent, if minor, theme in SF, with outstanding pieces such as John Varley's *Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance* and Robert Silverberg's novella *Going* making use of musical protagonists. To go back to the

classics, E. M. Forster's story *The Machine Stops* has Vashti, the main character's mother, lecturing on Australian music from the machine-pampered confines of her dystopian habitat:

> She opened with a humorous account of music in the pre-Mongolian epoch, and went on to describe the great outburst of song that followed the Chinese conquest. Remote and primaeval as were the methods of I-San-So and the Brisbane school, she yet felt...

When the information is kept fairly vague, and couched in nice esoteric jargon, it is quite easy to avoid making a fool of oneself, and a musicologist's credibility isn't too badly perturbed. The same goes for when, in FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID, Philip K. Dick tosses off a very reasonable (if critically unorthodox) remark about the music of the past from the standpoint of the year 1988:

> Wagner and those like him, such as Berlioz, had set music back three centuries. Until Karlheinz Stockhausen in his *Gesang der Junglinge* had once more brought music up to date.

But science fiction writers are on much more dangerous ground when they attempt to extrapolate a music of the future — in particular the remote future. Often it is simple ignorance of the incredible developments in contemporary serious music of the past fifty or so years.

Anybody who isn't a musicologist, or who does not belong to the peculiar fandom of the musical "New Wave" — a far stranger assortment of people, even, than science fiction fans — can be forgiven for not having kept abreast. Actually, the proliferation of contemporary "isms" in music threatens to outnumber the works produced!

To show how far behind the general public is: ask an educated person about "modern" music and he might remark: "Ah yes, Schoenberg and all that." He would be referring to the beginning of serialism, back in the 1920's! Since that time we have been through integral serialism and post-serialism, which are all dying out — except to academe. A more enlightened music lover might say something about electronic music. Well, that crested in the fifties, and is definitely rather passe now — except in academe. Today's "isms" are as radically different from those of, say, 40 years ago, as a Beethoven Symphony is different from gregorian plainchant.

Today there are such things as minimalism, where you try to have as little as possible going on, preferably for as long as possible; environmental music — such as a piece by a friend of mine, Jose

Maceda, which has 1,000 non-musicians sitting in the fields hitting little sticks and moaning — is intentionally monotonous, sounds silly in writing but in reality is curiously evocative and magical; attempts at non-developmental music, which rejects causality and the linear development that has been at the root of all Western music since the beginning — and phrases such as "textural polyphony," "retrograde inversion" and "semi-aleatory" have long replaced such ideas as "melody," "harmony" and so on. A piece such as John Cage's *Silence,* where nothing at all is played for the entire piece, isn't freaky at all any more: it's an established classic of several decades' standing. The aesthetics of music are being dramatically and fundamentally changed.

So why is it, then, that when an sf writer mentions music — be it of the 21st or the 97th Century — he has a tendency to wax lyrical about haunting melodies, and not to extrapolate at all? Or even to bear the music of his own time in mind?

By far the most reasonable proposition is that new, perhaps synaesthetic art forms will emerge. The artistic pigeonholes are already disintegrating, after all. And future art forms are quite frequent in sf: the Mule in the FOUNDATION series, who induces hallucinatory and mind-controlling images in his audience with the help of a quasi-musical instrument, is a sort of archetype of this. It's surprising how often the *imagery* of these new art forms is made analogous to that of music. In John Varley's recent story, *The Phantom of Kansas,* "environmental happenings" are called "symphonies" and they are explained to the reader by analogy with musical symphonies — though I suspect that by then the symphony, which arose in the mid-eighteenth century and has already more or less ceased to be a viable form for contemporary composers, would have about as much influence on the musical and trans-musical thought of John Varley's Lunar culture as the mediaeval *cantus firmus* had on Cole Porter. In other words, the "inviolate" artistic canons of a given period are, in fact, *incredibly* transient.

Here's another example: The Mouse in Samuel R. Delany's novel NOVA, who plays an extraordinary instrument, beautifully evoked:

> Colors sluiced the air with fugal patterns as a shape subsumed the breeze and fell, to form further on, a brighter emerald, a duller amethyst. Odors flushed the wind with vinegar, snow, ocean, ginger, poppies, rum. Autumn, ocean, ginger, ocean, autumn; ocean, ocean, the surge of ocean again, while light

> foamed in the dimming blue that underlit the Mouse's face. Electric arpeggios of a neo-raga rilled.

While Delany suggests — by juxtaposing flavor, scent, vision, and sound images — a synaesthetic experience, his basic image is musical. Words like "fugal" and "arpeggios" — very precise musical terms — aren't being used in their technical senses, but to imply an analogy with musical structures which becomes explicit when he talks about the neo-raga. *Raga* suggests the Indian sitar player (a *raga,* to oversimplify wildly, is the fundamental theme on which the sitar player improvises); so this alien art form of the distant future is actually very firmly rooted in our time.

What he's done is to take some of the metaphors which, in *our* time, are frequently applied to music, and to literalize them, so that his transmusical art form is producing *actual* images of ocean and autumn, and, by some pretty astounding technological means is either synthesizing complicated organic gases to evoke the right smells, or somehow stimulating the olfactory areas of the brain with amazing accuracy — all this to produce images which are probably inextricably linked with the *twentieth* century's artistic perceptions! And of course, that is why Delany's description is evocative for us: because it literalizes our preformed notions of what music is supposed to be about — the very notions which are the most likely things that will have altered by the time his imagined future might take place. To me, this seems an inescapable problem; Samuel R. Delany's solution is probably as good as can be devised.

I'd like to look at two very different science fiction works, both told from the point of view of a composer. Fred Hoyle's short novel, OCTOBER THE FIRST IS TOO LATE, has the world temporarily splitting up into time-fractures, with Europe slipping into the First World War, Greece into the Periclean age, and a society several thousand years into the future springing up in South America. Through the character of the composer-protagonist, Hoyle makes some quite amusing comments about some of the excesses of the music of the sixties:

> My intention was a set of variations in serial form. I chose the serial formula, partly as a technical exercise, partly because I had a fancy to end each variation with the sound of a farmyard animal.

Later the composer is confronted with the music of the future — performed by a stunningly attractive woman disguised as an ancient Greek priestess of Apollo:

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> ...this was not twelve tone music, all the tones were not being used. Yet it wasn't tonal in the sense of our system of key. ... I had the strong impression of rules depending somehow on the form of the work itself ... the rules at the beginning and those at the end seemed different, and different again from those in the middle.

Actually, I would say that this is the most reasonable example of musical extrapolation I have seen. In fact, I am surprised that some composer has not seized upon this idea and begun to use it. Of course, given a straight line of musical development, it would be surprising to find, 3000 years from now, music that is only a slight extension from twentieth century thought: but Fred Hoyle cleverly eludes this objection by building his story around a cyclical view of history.

In Robert Silverberg's novella *Going,* one of my favorites, a composer, Henry Staunt, is preparing to die or "go" after a productive 135 years of life. In this society, dated 2095, one can pick the time of one's own death.

Now, Staunt would have been born in 1960. One would assume that the composers who are writing *now* would be seminal influences in his work. Such contemporary composers as George Crumb, who writes very colorful, surreal music often involving frighteningly vivid amplifications, or the Hungarian Gyorgy Ligeti, who creates slow-moving, sonorous clusters of orchestral colours — might be some of the logical figures in Henry Staunt's immediate musical heritage. A generation back, you'd have such people as Stockhausen and Boulez, whose "plinkety-plonk" music dominatated the fifties; and in the grandfather stage such ancients as Stravinsky. And yet, music in 2095 seems to ignore everything that happened between 1920 and 1977:

> Staunt has been a busy man. He looks at the titles stamped on the bindings of the manuscripts: the symphonies, the string quartets, the concerti, the miscellaneous chamber works, the songs, the sonatas, the cantatas, the operas...

The general public might be 50 or so years behind in its assimilation of artistic concepts — but surely not a practitioner. I think it is fairly safe to say that, right now, right here in 1978, no composer under 55 is sitting in a room surrounded by scores of his own symphonies, concerti and string quartets, or would consider composing anything of the sort.

But the anachronism isn't merely in the musical forms Henry Staunt is writing in. It extends also to his artistic attitudes:

> Because life still seems sweet, I give it up today. And so I take my final

pleasure: that of relinquishing the only thing left to me worth keeping.

If I had known only that a composer had uttered these words, I would unhesitantly have attributed them to Gustav Mahler. This attitude is the very essence of late-Romantic music, and is crystallized in the late Mahler symphonies of the turn of the century. I'm not in any way questioning the validity of Staunt as a character: but, from the point of view of cultural history, his attitudes, both musical and artistic, have been transplanted wholesale from this period. And if you were to alter the background of the story to 1910, almost everything Henry Staunt says about music (apart from obvious anachronisms) would become extremely reasonable.

Now, proponents of autobiographical-psychoanalytical criticism have seen in *Going* a kind of late Silverberg self-portrait, what with his recently bidding farewell to science fiction. Such theories really deserve little comment, except to highlight one thing which, I think, pertains to almost all users of the "future music" concept.

It's not that all sf writers are tone deaf: it's simply that music, as a Literary Idea, is not the same as music, as Music. The *idea* of Music, in NOVA, in *Going,* is a very potent literary image regardless of attempts or non-attempts at extrapolation — in fact, it works best when rooted in existing philosophies, and *divorced* from technical and formal aspects of music. Consider Heinlein's Rhysling, the blind singer of the spaceways (and an obvious great-grandchild of Orpheus): although his music would almost certainly not sound like Heinlein's portrayal of it, his *character* provides powerful, moving imagery. Here, as in many other instances, the use of music in fiction evokes various emotional, mythopoeic and archetypal responses which, in music itself, are often irrelevant. It is these responses which justify the use of music in sf, regardless of the technical aspects involved. ●

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Skiing to the top of his profession meant skiing at the edge of death . . .

UPHILL RACER

by Daniel Gordon

Carlson moves into starting position and makes a last-minute check of his equipment. His skis are securely attached to his boots. Both boots fit snugly but not too tightly. His poles are dug into the snow on either side, ready to thrust him forward. His only clothing, the total-insulation hot-suit, envelops him; from his ankles to his head, except for the transparent patch around his eyes and small holes for his mouth and nostrils, he is enclosed in blackness formed in his own image.

Now he checks the most important piece of equipment, his own body. It is reacting properly without his conscious command; the experience of hundreds of races tell it what to do better than Carlson could. His muscles tense, his adrenalin flows, and his heart quickens. That much any sportsman might do in preparation for competition, but Carlson's body goes further. His blood and breath roar in their separate passages, his metabolism speeds, his body temperature rises, and soon he is living at a faster rate than the people around him. Now he is ready for the most grueling of all sports, uphill racing.

Carlson surveys the long white course that lies ahead of him, stretching down the mountain. All along it, on either side, spectators form an outline, cheering, waving flags, stretching and pushing to get a good view. They are eagerly waiting for Carlson to go by them once, twice, three and four times, more haggard each time and a little closer to death. He will not disappoint them.

Now sure that all is in readiness, Carlson decides that the time has come. He digs his poles deep into the snow and propels himself forward, his skis lifting over the snow onto the course. As his body breaks the beam of light in front of the starting line the clock starts. He hurls himself downhill, gaining speed, trading potential energy for kinetic. Soon he will have to make another trade, but he does not think about that. He follows the course, ignoring the throngs about him, concentrating only on the race. Still, other thoughts intrude, playing over and over in his mind. One thought stands out: this is his last race.

Ernest Carlson is the fifth racer of the day. Already four of his rivals have finished the course and are down in the lodge, recovering and watching him, comparing their performances to his. With admiration and envy they watch the black figure slice downward against the white background, ski poles and boot buckles flashing silver in the sun.

Carlson's temperature continues to rise. If he were a normal person he would be considered ill. But he is not a normal person. Far from sick, Carlson feels ecstatic, bursting with the excess energy his body

is producing. Soon he will need it desperately, but for now he races down the slope in a blaze of power. He is an uphill skier, one of the few people who can stand the tortures of the sport as no normal person can. And he is the best.

Uphill skiing is a grueling sport; it has killed many who attempted it before they were ready. Yet, despite its danger and the terrible toll it exacts from the human body, people do it. And as long as there are people willing to ski uphill, there are spectators to watch them.

They stand along the slope, or sit in their homes before trivees that show every angle. They savor the brutal competition among the skiers, not against their rivals as much as against the clock, and, most of all, against themselves. Right now these fans are looking forward to next season, but Carlson knows better. He knows that it is the last day for uphill skiing.

He does not mourn it. Carlson has known, even from the start, that its days were numbered; perhaps this is why he loves it and excels in it. And now his body knows it must submit to the torture of an uphill race this one last time. Knowing that, it gives its all, and just a little bit more.

Carlson flies downhill, thinking of the birth and death of uphill skiing.

In 1997, Carlson was only a small child, but even then he felt the effects of the first transmatters on his life and on society as a whole. He grew up in a world changed by instantaneous teleportation, but it was not until 2012 that the transmatters claimed him as their own.

By that time Carlson had been skiing, downhill, for years. He noted with interest that a man named Hooper, the owner of a ski resort, had decided that lifts were old-fashioned. Hooper had two transmatters installed, one at the base of his mountain and one at the top. He called reporters in to see how he was revolutionizing skiing, and took the chair lift up. Then he skied down, and the reporters watched expectantly as he skied into the transmatter and vanished. They waited for him to ski back down.

It was half an hour before someone went up to look for him. They took the lift.

The reason Hooper hadn't come down was that, when he emerged from the top transmatter, he was over a kilometer higher than he had been before. In rising that high he gained potential energy that had its source in heat. He went in at thirty-seven degreees Celsius — normal body temperature — and came out at thirty-two. They found him lying in the snow, collapsed in shock, unable to move. He recovered, but from then on he used a lift.

Still, the idea had been shown to

have possibilities. On beginner slopes the drop in temperature was usually very small, so many ski areas installed transmatters on the smaller slopes. They were cheaper than chair lifts or T-bars, and they eliminated lift lines, since people merely skied into the bottom transmatter and emerged at the top to ski down again.

Out of curiosity Carlson went to one of these slopes and tried it. Every time he went through he was a little colder, but if he went slowly he regained enough warmth to go through again and again. He had expected to return to the regular slopes as soon as the novelty wore off, but he didn't, because he noticed something odd: he was only one of many advanced skiers on the beginner slope. Soon he saw why.

They were racing. Good skiers would keep going through the transmatters, picking up speed, until one of the racers quit or fell behind by a lap. It became a matter of daring: would people stop when they became too cold to ski well, or would they go until they fell, unable to continue? Carlson tried this new form of competition and found that he liked it.

Before long he became one of the diehards who led the way to uphill skiing. They demanded transmatters be used on larger slopes with bigger temperature drops. As the slopes became larger, fewer skiers could stand the strain, and those who continued kept getting better, as their bodies adjusted and adapted to the rigors.

For Carlson and a handful of others, uphill skiing grew from a fad into a sport.

Now Carlson completes the last big turn of the course and heads for the transmatter. It is large, big enough for three skiers to go through side by side, but occasionally skiers have hit its sides, when they skied to the point of grogginess. The combination of damage from hitting the transmatter at high speeds, and shock from losing heat in whatever part of the body goes through, then regaining it suddenly when the skier is pulled out, can be serious. Every season a few uphill skiers are killed this way.

Carlson pushes for top speed on the final straight stretch. He hears the roar of the crowd, barely louder than the wind rushing by. He heads for the center of the transmatter, and ...

Through the years Carlson has achieved a certain detachment by imagining himself a spectator, watching the race on trivee, so that he can separate himself a little from the pain. He visualizes the camera following him to the bottom of the course, then switching to the top. Superimposed in the corners of the picture are his temperature and heartbeat. He can feel his heart beating wildly and his

temperature, which was up to forty, plummet five degrees in the wink of an eye. The thought helps, but not much, for he is in the race and his body is reporting every lost calorie.

Carlson emerges suddenly at the top of the mountain, gliding through the air for a moment because the top slope is slightly steeper than the bottom, for safety. He can imagine the camera zooming in on his face, showing all the pain and suffering of humanity in the features of one human being who is pushing his endurance to the limit. His furious rate of metabolism sends his lowered temperature slowly, painfully back up.

The shock of uphill racing is, as always, as incredible to Carlson as the first time he tried it. Somehow he manages to keep going, despite his cold joints, muscles, and brain cells. He feels groggy but he skis on, grateful for the initial straight run in which he can recover a little before facing the harder sections. His body takes over as he continues down the treacherous slope.

Uphill skiers wear suits of a plastic that is an almost perfect insulator, so good that as soon as they regain their normal body temperature after a race, skiers must take off their suits or fry. Monitors, small and light enough not to bother the skiers, send their vital functions to receivers so that doctors and spectators can see how the contestants are holding up. Biofeedback techniques show the skiers how to speed up their metabolism in minutes or seconds so that the food with which they stuff themselves several hours before the race will not be wasted. These are the ways science, which gave birth to the transmatters, helps the skier prepare himself for the ultimate test of himself against the clock, fellow skiers, the elements, and most of all, himself.

Downhill skiing survives, but uphill skiing commands a peculiar fascination. Carlson's experience goes beyond speed, to endurance of cold and physical hardship. He has to ski as fast as he can on the way down, but it is on the way up he does most of his work. His body loses millions of joules that must be made up. A week before a race he starts eating mounds of high-protein and high-carbohydrate food, much like long distance runners, who must prepare themselves to endure the grueling miles of a marathon. The difference is that an uphill skier does it faster; he loses energy in an instant and has only minutes to build it back up before the next loss.

A marathon runner unable to finish a race can stop running, but, as Carlson has discovered, he has no such easy way out. He learned this during an early race, when he tried a full-sized course before he was ready. It was his first major race, and he was impatient. He

passed through the first jump well, but weakened on the second. He managed to stay on the course, and tried to decide whether or not to take the third jump (known to the skiers as the Killer). He knew that most skiers manage to get their body heat above normal for the first two jumps, but that by the third it is impossible to even get their heat back to normal, so the drop is even greater.

His brain foggy from the cold, Carlson couldn't decide, so he went through by default. As he made the jump he realized that he should have turned aside, that his body temperature was nowhere near normal, and that he was putting himself in serious danger. But he went through.

When he came out he was colder throughout his entire body than he had ever imagined possible. He doubled up in agony and rolled down the course helplessly for a while before stopping somehow. From his collapse to his recovery in the lodge, he remembers only the terrible, all-pervasive cold.

It took him a long time after that to ski again. And a longer time to uphill ski.

Carlson takes a small leap well, regaining control quickly for the final turn. He feels his heart trying to pump the blood that his body demands for heat. It is succeeding, to some extent; at least he hasn't started to feel pins and needles in his arms and legs.

Not yet.

He feels almost back to normal, but already exhaustion is starting to overtake him. He ignores it and continues to push his body beyond its limits. One last time, he tells himself, one last time and then he can quit. No, he will not quit, he will be made obsolete by his sport's own obsolescence.

The people on either side of him flash by, having no individual qualities: just a blur of nameless faces, congealed into a crowd that watches as he almost destroys himself. What, he wonders, do they see in the sport? Why do they fight for the chance to come here, to get a place near the top so that they can see his reactions?

More importantly, why does he do it?

Pondering these questions, he hurls himself down the slope and goes through the transmatter ...

... and hurtles out atop the slope, where it's worse this time, just as it always is. At the first jump his temperature was above normal, and on this one he feels the full drop from normal temperature. And next time — the Killer.

In the old days of downhill skiing, Carlson was an also-ran. He was on the verge of quitting professional skiing when he discovered uphill skiing.

As the sport developed, Carlson

developed with it. After a learning period, he became one of the first of a new breed, the group of real uphill skiers who changed themselves consciously for the competition. At first the techniques were crude, but Carlson improved his style while taking advantage of all the latest developments. He was among the first to wear a total-insulation suit, despite rumors that the suits caused cancer. He had a doctor monitor him, to suggest ways to reduce the strain and ski better.

Carlson became the best, and he stayed on top of things to remain the best. He holds practically every record there is, and enters each race as the favorite to win. Fans follow his every move, aware they are witnessing the ultimate in human striving.

It is ironic that Carlson is the only one who realizes that uphill skiing is doomed, and that he is running not only the last race of the season, but the last race ever. Even as he skis down the course, he knows that scientists are hard at work destroying the sport. Only he realizes that he is at the end of an era.

Once again the final curve goes by, and the transmatter is staring at Carlson, daring him to enter its mouth one more time. Grimly he aims toward it. He is now totally unaware of the crowds, of their imcomprehensible cheering, of the cameras that follow him. The universe has shrunk to the course itself, a loop bounded by the two transmatters.

Now, as always, there is the temptation to leave that universe, to turn aside and avoid the pain. Carlson hears a voice inside him, screaming, begging him to stop now, but he ignores it. This jump is the last he will ever have to make, although knowing that will not make it hurt less. Still, Carlson must go through, must ski as fast as he possibly can to set a final record, one that will stand forever, so that long after uphill skiing has become a memory he will be tied to it, inseparable from it in the minds of all uphill racing fans.

So he stays pointed toward the transmatter, and for the last time...

... he comes through. It is the Killer, aptly named. His temperature, which had not reached normal, is now incredibly low. It takes a massive effort of will to think, to move his legs, to ski or stand at all, but he does it. The cameras capture him, as he flies from the top transmatter, in a picture that will appear in every newspaper, and later in some booktapes: Carlson, his eyes filled with torment (though some will claim to find joy there), his feet nailed to the skis, his arms flung outward for an instant in triumph. He lands and continues downward, leaving the

sport of uphill racing in a blaze of glory.

Science made the sport, and it was inevitable that science would break it. The invention of the transmatter created the conditions in which uphill skiing flourished, and the invention of a transmatter that could supply the energy difference in electricity rather than heat would make the sport merely a part of downhill skiing.

Carlson had seen that it would happen, and so had gotten in touch with scientists, to keep up with the developments he knew would doom his sport. For a long time he had been given clues of research starting to bear fruit, and only a day before the race he had learned the breakthrough had been made.

By next season, the slopes will be covered with the new transmatters, and no one will have to endure the old agony ever again. Given the choice, not even Carlson would choose the pain. Uphill skiing might yet survive, but the real sport will be gone with the heat drops. Carlson can retire secure in the knowledge that he was the best, and that, unlike Babe Ruth and all other sports legends, his records will never be threatened. No one will ever surpass what he has done. As long as people remember uphill skiing, they will remember Ernest Carlson. So he skies on, for the very last time.

Finally Carlson rounds the last turn and heads not for the transmatter, but for the finish line under the banner. He feels frozen, groggy, and tired, but there is a deep-seated feeling of accomplishment beneath that. He gives a final effort to get a little more speed, and slides under the banner, exhausted. He has done what he set out to do.

As the spectators run toward Carlson he smiles, and waves at the cameras. The fans pick him up and carry him toward the lodge. His time flashes on the display board, and it is a good one. There is no doubt in his mind that he will win; he knows Ernest Carlson will be remembered as a champion. And Carlson realizes that he has his answer, the answer to why he skis, the answer to why he stood the pain and suffering for so long. How many people, after all, can know truly that they were the best at something?

He can.

It is enough. ●

update:

Steve Vance, whose "Conjugal Rites" was the cover story in issue #5, has recently signed a contract with Nordon Publications, Inc., to publish his first novel. The book (working title: *The Revolt of the Gawfs*) will be issued as part of the Leisure Books line.

Revealed to all at last — the truth in the case of London's notorious hooded alien!

The Ape-box Affair

by James P. Blaylock

A good deal of controversy arose late in the last century over what has been referred to by the more livid newpapers as "The Horror in St. James Park" or "The Ape-box Affair." Even these thirty years later, a few people remember that little intrigue, though most would change the subject rather abruptly if you broached it, and many are still unaware of the relation, or rather the lack of relation, between the actual ape-box and the spacecraft that plunked down in the Park's duck pond.

The memoirs of Professor Langdon St. Ives, however, which passed into my hands after the poor man's odd disappearance, pretty clearly implicate him in the affair. His own orang-outang, I'll swear it, and the so-called Hooded Alien are one and the same creature. There is little logical connection, however, between that creature and "the thing in the box"

which has since also fallen my way, and is nothing more than a clockwork child's toy. The ape puppet in that box, I find after a handy bit of detective work, was modeled after the heralded "Moko the Educated Ape" which toured with a Bulgarian Gypsy fair and which later became the central motif of the mysterious Robert Service sonnet, "The Headliner and the Breadliner." That the ape in the box became linked to St. Ives' shaven orang-outang is a matter of the wildest coincidence — a coincidence that generated a chain of activities no less strange or incredible. This then is the tale, and though the story is embellished here and there for the sake of dramatic realism, it is entirely factual in the main.

Professor St. Ives was a brilliant scientist, and the history books might some day acknowledge his full worth. But for the Chingford Tower fracas, and one or two other rather trivial affairs, he would be heralded by the Academy, instead of considered a sort of interesting lunatic.

His first delvings into the art of space travel were those which generated the St. James Park matter, and they occurred on, or better yet, were culminated in 1892 early in the morning of July 2. St. Ives' space craft was ball-shaped and large enough for one occupant; and because it was the first of a series of such crafts, that occupant was to be one Newton, a trained orang-outang who had only to push the right series of buttons when spacebound to motivate a magnetic homing device designed to reverse the craft's direction and set it about a homeward course. The ape's head was shaven to allow for the snug fitting of a sort of golden conical cap which emitted a meager electrical charge, sufficient only to induce a very mild sleep. It was of great importance that the ape remain docile while in flight, a condition which, as we shall see, was not maintained. The ape was also fitted with a pair of silver, magnetic-soled boots to affix him firmly to the deck of the ship; they would impede his movements in case he became restive, or, as is the problem with space travel, in case the forces of gravity should diminish.

Finally, St. Ives connected a spring-driven mechanism in a silver-colored box which puffed forth successive jets of oxygenated gas produced by the interaction of a concentrated chlorophyll solution with compressed helium — this combination producing the necessary atmosphere in the closed quarters of the ship.

The great scientist, after securing the ape to his chair and winding the chlorophyll box, launched the ship from the rear yard of his residence and laboratory in Harrogate. He watched the thing careen south

through the starry early-morning sky. It was at that point, his craft a pinpoint of light on the horizon, that St. Ives was stricken with the awful realization that he had neglected to fill the ape's food dispenser, a fact which would not have been of consequence except that the ape was to receive half a score of greengage plums as a reward for pushing the several buttons which would affect the gyro and reverse the course of the ship. The creature's behavior once he ascertained that he had, in effect, been cheated of his greengages, was unpredictable. There was nothing to be done, however, but for St. Ives to crawl wearily in to bed and hope for the best.

Several weeks previous to the launching of the craft (pardon the digression here; its pertinence will soon become apparent) a Bulgarian Gypsy caravan had set up a bit of a carnival in Chelsea, where they sold the usual salves and potions and such rot, as well as providing entertainments. Now, Wilfred Keeble was a toymaker who lived on Whitehall above the Old Shades and who, though not entirely daft, was eccentric. He was also the unloved brother of Winnifred Keeble, newly monied wife of Lord Placer. To be a bit more precise, he was loved well enough by his sister, but his brother-in-law couldn't abide him. Lord Placer had little time for the antics of his wife's lowlife relative, and even less for carnivals or circuses of gypsies. His daughter Olivia, therefore, sneaked away and cajoled her Uncle Wilfred into taking her to the gypsy carnival. Keeble assented, having little use himself for Lord Placer's august stuffiness, and off they went to the carnival, which proved to be a rather pale affair, aside from the antics of Moko the Educated Ape. Actually, a far as Keeble was concerned, the ape itself was nothing much, being trained merely to sit in a great chair and puff on a cigar while seeming to pore over a copy of the *Times* which, more often than not, it held upside down or sideways or chewed at or tore up or gibbered over.

Olivia was fascinated by the creature and flew home begging her father for a pet ape, an idea which not only sent a thrill of horror and disgust up Lord Placer's spine, but which caused him to confound his brother-in-law and everything connected with him for having had such a damnable effect on his daughter. Olivia, her hopes dashed by her father's ape loathing, confided her grief to Uncle Wilfred who, although he knew that the gift of a real ape would generate conflicts best not thought about, could see no harm in fashioning a toy ape.

He set about in earnest to create such a thing and, in a matter of weeks, came up with one of those

clockwork, key-crank jack-in-the-boxes. It was a silver cube painted with vivid circus depictions; when wound tightly, a comical ape got up as a mandarin and with whirling eyes would spring out and shout a snatch of verse. Wilfred Keeble was pretty thoroughly pleased with the thing, but he knew that it would be folly to go visiting his brother-in-law's house with such a wild and unlikely gift, in the light of Lord Placer's hatred of such things. There was a boy downstairs, a Jack Owlesby, who liked to earn a shilling here and there, and so Keeble called him up and, wrapping the box in paper and dashing off a quick note, sent Jack out into the early morning air two and six richer for having agreed to deliver the gift. Having sat up all night to finish the thing, Keeble crawled wearily into bed at, it seems, nearly the same hour that Langdon St. Ives did the same after launching his spacecraft.

Three people — two indigent gentlemen who seemed sea-captainish in a devastated sort of way, and a shrunken fellow with a yellow cloth cap who was somehow responsible for the chairs scattered about the green — were active in St. James Park that morning; at least those are the only three whose testimony was later officially transcribed. According to the *Times* report, these chaps, at about 7:00 AM, saw, as one of them stated, "a great fiery thing come sailing along like a bloody flying head," — an adequate enough description of St. Ives' ship which, gone amuck, came plunging into the south end of the Park's duck pond.

This visitation of a silver orb from space would, in itself, have been sufficient to send an entire park full of people shouting into the city, but, to the three in the park, it seemed weak tea indeed when an alien-seeming beast sailed out on impact through the sprung hatch, a bald-headed but otherwise hairy creature with a sort of golden dunce cap, woefully small, perched atop his head. Later, one of the panhandlers, a gentleman named Hornby, babbled some rubbish about a pair of flaming stilts, but the other two agreed that the thing wore high-topped silver boots, and, to a man, they remarked of an "infernal machine" which the thing carried daintily between his outstretched hands like a delicate balloon as it fled into Westminster.

There was, of course, an immediate hue and cry, responded to by two constables and a handful of sleepy and disheveled horse guards who raced about skeptically between the witnesses while poor Newton, fuddled and hungry, disappeared into the city. At least three journalists appeared within half an hour's time and were soon hotfooting it away quick as you please with the tale of the alien

ship, the star beast, and the peculiar and infernal machine.

Newton, St. Ives' orang-outang, had begun to grow restless somewhere over Yorkshire, just as the professor had supposed he would. Now all of this is a matter of conjecture, but logic would point with a stiffish finger toward the probability that the electronic cap atop the ape's head either refused to function or functioned incorrectly, for Newton had commenced his antics within minutes of take-off. There were reports, in fact, of an erratic glowing sphere zigging through the sky above Long Bennington that same morning, an indication that Newton, irate, was pretty thoroughly giving the controls the once over. One can only suppose that the beast, anticipating a handful of plums, began stabbing away at the crucial buttons unaffected, as he must have been, by the cap. That it took a bit longer for him to run thoroughly amok indicates the extent of his trust in St. Ives. The professor, in his papers, reports that the control panel itself was finally dashed to bits and the chlorophyll-atmosphere box torn cleanly from the side of the cabin. Such devastation couldn't have been undertaken before the craft was approaching Greater London; probably it occurred above South Mimms, where the ship was observed by the populace to be losing altitude. This marked the beginning of the plunge into London.

Although the creature had sorted through the controls rather handily, those first plum buttons, luckily for him, activated at least partially St. Ives's gyro homing device. Had the beast been satisfied and held off on further mayhem, he would quite possibly have found himself settling back down in Harrogate at St. Ives's laboratory. As it was, the reversing power of the craft was enough finally to promote, if not a gentle landing, at least one which, taking into account the cushion of water involved, was not fatal to poor Newton.

Jack Owlesby, meanwhile, ambled along down Whitehall, grasping the box containing Keeble's ape contraption, and anticipating a meeting with Keeble's niece whom he had admired more than once. He was, apparently, a good enough lad, as we'll see, and had been, coincidentally enough, mixed in with Langdon St. Ives himself some little time ago in another of St. Ives' scientific shenanigans. Anyway, because of his sense of duty and the anticipation of actually speaking to Olivia, he popped right along for the space of five minutes before realising that he could hardly go pounding away on Lord Placer's door at such an inhuman hour of the morning. He'd best, thought he, sort of angle up around the square and down The

Mall to the park to kill a bit of time. A commotion of some nature and a shouting lot of people drew him naturally along and, as would have happened to anyone in a like case, he went craning away across the road, unconscious of a wagon of considerable size which was gathering speed some few feet off his starboard side. A horn blasted, Jack leapt forward with a shout, clutching his parcel, and a brougham, unseen behind the wagon, plowed over him like an express, the driver cursing and flailing his arms.

The long and the short of it is that Jack's box, or rather Keeble's box, set immediate sail and bounced along unhurt into a park thicket ignored by onlookers who, quite rightly, rushed to poor Jack's aid.

The boy was stunned, but soon regained his senses and, although knocked about a good bit, suffered no real damages. The mishaps of a boy, however, weren't consequential enough to hold the attention of the crowd, not even of the Lord Mayor, who was in the fateful brougham. He had been rousted out of an early morning bed by the reports of dangerous aliens and inexplicable mechanical contrivances. He rather fancied the idea of a smoke and a chat and perhaps a pint of bitters later in the day with these alien chaps and so organized a "delegation," as he called it, to ride out and welcome them. He was far more concerned with the saddening report that the thing had taken flight to the south than with the silver sphere that bobbed in the pond. The ship had been towed to shore, but as yet no one had ventured to climb inside for fear of the unknown — an unfortunate and decisive hesitation, since a thorough examination would certainly have enabled an astute observer to determine its origin.

It was to young Jack's credit that, after he had recovered from the collision, he spent only a moment or so at the edge of the pond with the other spectators before becoming thoroughly concerned over the loss of the box. The letter from Keeble to Olivia lay yet within his coat, but the box seemed to have vanished like a magician's coin. He went so far as to stroll nonchalantly across the road again, reenacting, as they say, the scene of the crime or, in this case, the accident. He pitched imaginary boxes skyward and then clumped about through bushes and across lawns, thoroughly confounded by the disappearance. Had he known the truth, he'd have given up the search and gone about his business, or what was left of it, but he had been lying senseless when old grizzled Hornby, questioned and released by the constables, saw Jack's parcel crash down some few feet from him as he sat brooding in the bushes. In Hornby's circles one

didn't look a gift horse in the fabled mouth, not for long anyway, and he had the string yanked off and the wrapper torn free in a nonce.

Now you or I would have been puzzled by the box, silvery and golden as it was and with bright pictures daubed on in paint and a mysterious crank beneath, but Hornby was positively aghast. He'd seen such a thing that morning in the hands of a creature who, he still insisted, raged along in his wizard's cap on burning stilts. He dared not fiddle with it in light of all that, and yet he couldn't just pop out of the bushes waving it about either. This was a fair catch and, no doubt, a very valuable one. Why such a box should sail out of the skies was a poser, but this was clearly a day tailor-made for such occurrences. He scuttled away under cover of the thick greenery until clear of the mobbed pond area, then took to his heels and headed down toward Westminster with the vague idea of finding a pawn broker who had heard of the alien threat and would be willing to purchase such an unlikely item.

Jack, then, searched in vain, for the box he'd been entrusted with had been spirited away. His odd behavior, however, soon drew the attention of the constabulary who, suspicious of the very trees, asked him what he was about. He explained that he'd been given a metallic looking box, and a very wonderful box at that, and had been instructed to deliver it across town. The nature of the box, he admitted, was unknown to him for he'd glimpsed it only briefly. He suspected, though, that it was a toy of some nature.

"A toy is it, that we have here!" shouted Inspector Marleybone of Scotland Yard. "And who, me lad, was it gave you this toy?"

"Mister Keeble, sir, of Whitehall," said Jack very innocently and knowing nothing of a similar box which, taken to be some hideous device, was a subject of hot controversy. Here were boxes springing up like the children of Noah, and it took no longer than a moment or two before two police wagons were rattling away, one to ferret out this mysterious Keeble, in league, like as not, with aliens, and one to inquire after Lord Placer down near the Tate Gallery. Jack, as well as a dozen policemen, were left to continue futilely scouring the grounds.

Somehow Newton had managed, by luck or stealth, to slip across Victoria Street and fall in among the greengrocers and clothing sellers along Old Pye. Either they were fairly used to peculiar chaps in that section of town and so took no special notice of him, or else Newton, wittily, clung to the alleys and shadows and generally laid low, as they say. This latter

possibility is most likely the case, for Newton would have been as puzzled and frightened of London as had he actually been an alien; orang-outangs, being naturally shy and contemplative beasts, would, if given the choice, spurn the company of men. The incident, however, that set the whole brouhaha going afresh was sparked by a wooden fruit cart loaded, unfortunately, with nothing other than greengage plums.

Here was a poor woman, tired, I suppose, and at only eight o'clock or so in the morning, with her cart of fresh plums and two odious children. She set up along the curb, outside a bakery. As fortune would have it, she was an altogether kindly sort, and she towed her children in to buy a two-penny loaf, leaving her cart for the briefest of moments.

She returned, munching a slab of warm bread, in time to see the famished Newton, his greengages come round at last, hoeing into handfuls of the yellowy fruit. As the *Times* has the story, the ape was hideously covered with slime and juice, and, although the information is suspect, he took to hallooing in a resonant voice and to waving the box like a cudgel above his head. The good woman responded with shouts and "a call to Him above in this hour of dreadful things."

As I see it, Newton reacted altogether logically. Cheated of his greengages once, he had no stomach to be dealt with in such a manner again. He grasped the tongue of the cart, anchored his machine firmly in among the plums, and loped off down Old Pye Street toward St. Ann's.

Jack Owlesby searched as thoroughly as was sensible — more thoroughly perhaps, for, as I said, he was prompted and accompanied by the authorities, and as soon as the crowd in the park got wind of the possible presence of "a machine," they too savaged the bushes, surged up and down the road behind the Horse Guards, and tramped about Duck Island until the constables were forced to shout threats and finally give up their own search. The crowd thinned shortly thereafter, when a white-coated, bespectacled fellow hailing from the Museum came down and threw a tarpaulin over the floating ship.

Jack was at odds, blaming himself for the loss, but mystified and frustrated over its disappearance. There seemed to be only one option — to deliver the letter to young Olivia and then return the two and six to Mr. Keeble upon returning to the Old Shades. He set out, then, to do just that.

Inspector Marleybone was in an itch to get to the bottom of this invasion, as it were, which had so far been nothing more than the lunatic arrival of a single alien who had

since fled. Wild reports of flaming engines and howling, menacing giants were becoming tiresome. But, though rumors have always been the bane of the authorities, they seem to be meat and drink to the populace, and here was no exception. Bold headlines of "Martian Invasion" and "St. James Horror" had the common man in a state, and it may as well have been a bank holiday in London by 9:00 that morning. A fresh but grossly overblown account of the plum-cart incident reached poor Marleybone at about the time he arrived back at the Yard, just as he had begun toying with the idea that there had been no starship, nor hairy alien nor dread engine, and that all had been a nightmarish product of the oysters and Spanish wine he'd enjoyed the night before. But here were fresh accounts, and the populace honing kitchen knives, and a thoroughly befuddled Wilfred Keeble without his cap, being ushered in by two very serious constables.

Keeble, who normally liked the *idea* of romance and grand adventure, didn't at all like the real thing, and was a bit groggy from lack of sleep in the bargain. He listened, puzzled, to Marleybone's questions, which seemed, of course, madness. There was no reference, at first, to strange metallic boxes, but only to suspected dealings with alien space invaders and to Marleybone's certainty that Keeble was responsible, almost single-handedly, for the mobs which, shouting and clanking in their curiosity, came surging up and down the road at intervals on their way to gaze at the covered ball in the pond, and to search for whatever wonderful prizes had rained on London from the heavens.

Keeble pleaded his own ignorance and innocence and insisted that he was a toy-maker who knew little of invasions, and would have nothing to do with such things had he the opportunity. Marleybone was wary but tired, and his spirits fell another notch when Lord Placer, his own eyes glazed from a night of brandy and cards at the club, stormed in in a rage.

Although it was all very well to ballyrag Keeble, it was another thing entirely with Lord Placer, and so the inspector, with an affected smile, began to explain that Keeble seemed to be mixed into the alien affair, and that a certain metallic box, thought to be a threatening device of some nature or another, had been intercepted, then lost, en route from Keeble to Lord Placer. It wasn't strictly the truth, and Marleybone kicked himself for not having taken Jack Owlesby in tow so that he'd at least have someone to point the accusatory finger at. Lord Placer, although knowing even less at this point than did his brother-in-law (who, at the mention of a silver box saw a glimmer of light at the end of the

tunnel) was fairly sure he could explain the fracas away even so. Wilfred Keeble, he stated, was clearly a madman, a raving lunatic who, with his devices and fables, was attempting to drive the city mad for the sake of company. It was a clear go as far as Lord P. could determine, and although it did not lessen the horror of being dragged from a warm bed and charged as an alien invader, it was at least good to have such a simple explanation. Lunacy, Lord Placer held, was the impetus behind almost everything, especially his brother-in-law's actions, whether real or supposed.

Finally Marleybone did the sensible thing, and let the two go, wondering why in the devil he'd called them in in the first place. Although he believed for the most part Keeble's references to a jack-in-the-box, he was even more convinced of Lord Placer's hypothesis of general lunacy. He accompanied Lord Placer to his coach, apologizing profusely for the entire business. Lord P. grunted and agreed, as the horses clopped away, to contact Scotland Yard in the event that the mysterious machine should, by some twist of insane fate, show up at his door.

Lady Placer, the former Miss Keeble, met her husband as he dragged in from the coach, mumbling curses about her brother. If anyone in the family had, as the poet said, "gone round the bend," it was Winnifred, who was slow witted as a tooth-pick. She was, however, tolerant of her brother, and couldn't altogether fathom her husband's dislike of him, although she set great store in old Placer's opinions, and thus often found herself in a muddle over the contrary promptings of her heart and mind. She listened, then, with great curiosity to Lord Placer's confused story of the rumoured invasion, the monster in the park, and his own suspected connection with the affair, which was entirely on account of her damned brother's rumminess.

Winnifred, having heard the shouting newsboys, knew something was in the air, and was mystified to find that her own husband and brother were mixed up in it. She was thoroughly awash when her husband stumbled away to bed, but was not overly worried, for confusion was one of the humours she felt near to and was comfortable with. She did wonder, however, at the fact that Lord Placer was involved in such weird doings, and she debated whether her daughter should be sent away, perhaps to her aunt's home near Dover, until the threat was past. Then it struck her that she wasn't at all sure what the threat was, and that spaceships might land in Dover as well as London, and also that, at any rate, her husband probably wasn't in league with these aliens after all. She wandered

out to her veranda to look at a magazine. It was about then, I'd calculate, that the weary Marley-bone got wind of the canteloupe business and headed streetward again, this time in the company of the Lord Mayor's delegation.

It's not to be thought that, while Scotland Yard was grilling its suspects, Newton and Jack Owlseby and, of course, old Hornby who was about town with one of the two devices, stood about idle. Newton, in fact, set out in earnest to enhance his already ballooning reputation. After making off with the plum cart, he found himself unpursued, and deep into Westminster, heading, little did he know, toward Horseferry Road. It's folly for an historian in such a case to do other than conjecture, but it seems to me that, sated with plums but still ravenous, as you or I might be sated with sweets while desiring something more substantial, he sighted the melon cart wending its way toward the greengrocers along Old Pye. Newton moored his craft in an alley, his box rooted in the midst of the plums, and hastened after the melon man, who was anything but pleased with the ape's appearance. He'd as yet heard nothing of the alien threat, and so took Newton to be an uncommonly ugly and bizarrely dressed thief. Hauling a riding crop from a peg on the side of the cart, the melon man laid about him with a will, cracking away at the perplexed orang-outang with wonderful determination, and shouting the while for a constable.

Newton, aghast, and taking advantage of his natural jungle agility, attempted to clamber up a wrought-iron pole which supported a striped canvas awning. His weight, of course, required a stout tree rather than a precariously moored pole, and the entire business gave way, entangling the ape in the freed canvas. The grocer pursued his attack, the ruckus having drawn quite a crowd, many of whom recognised the ape as a space invader, and several of whom took the trailing canvas, which had become impaled on the end of Newton's conical cap, to be some sort of Arab head-gear. That, to be sure, explains the several accounts of alien-Mohammedan conspiracies which found their way into the papers. References to an assault by the invader against the melon man are unproven and, I think, utterly false.

When Newton fled, followed by the mob, he found his plum cart as he had left it — except for the box, which had disappeared.

Jack Owlesby hadn't walked more than a half mile, still glum as a herring over Keeble's misplaced trust, when, strictly by chance, he glanced up an alley off St. Ann's and saw a plum cart lying unattended therein. The startling thing

was, that as you can guess, an odd metallic box was nestled in among the plums. Jack drew near and determined, on the strength of the improbability of any other explanation, that the box was his own, or, rather, Olivia's. He had seen the thing only briefly before it had been wrapped, so his putting the gypsy touch to it can be rationalised, and even applauded. Because he had no desire to encounter whoever stole the thing, he set out immediately, supposing himself to have patched up a ruinous morning.

Old Hornby had not been as fortunate as had Jack. His conviction that the box was extra-terrestrial was scoffed at by several pawnbrokers who, seeming vaguely interested in the prize, attempted to coerce Hornby to hand it over to them for inspection. Sly Hornby realized that these usurious merchants were in league to swindle him, and he grew ever more protective of the thing as he, too, worked his way south. His natural curiosity drew him toward a clamoring mob which pursued some unseen thing.

It seemed to Hornby as if he "sniffed aliens" in the air and, as far as it goes, he was correct. He also assumed, this time incorrectly, that some profit was still to be had from these aliens, and so, swiftly and cunningly, he left the mob on Monck Street, set off through the alleys, and popped out at about the point that Horseferry winds around the mouth of Regency Street, head-on into the racing Newton who, canvas headgear and all, was outdistancing the crowd. Hornby was heard to shout, "Hey there," or "You there," or some such, before being bowled over, the ape snatching Hornby's treasured box away as it swept past, thinking it, undoubtedly, the box that had been purloined in the alley.

Jack Owlesby, meanwhile, arrived at Lord Placer's door and was admitted through the rear entrance by the butler, an affable sort who wandered off to drum up Miss Olivia at Jack's insistence. Lord Placer, hearing from the butler that a boy stood in the hall with a box for Olivia, charged into Jack's presence in a fit of determination. He'd played the fool for too long, or so he thought, and he intended to dig to the root of the business. He was well into the hall when he realized that he was dressed in his nightshirt and cap, a pointed cloth affair, and wore his pointy-toed silk house slippers which were, he knew, ridiculous. His rage overcame his propriety, and, of course, this was only an errand boy, not a friend from the club, so he burst along and jerked the box away from an amazed Jack Owlesby.

"Here we have it!" he shouted, examining the thing.

"Yes, sir," said Jack. "If you

please, sir, this is meant for your daughter and was sent by Mr. Keeble."

"Keeble has a hand in everything, it seems," cried Lord Placer, still brandishing the box as if it were a great diamond in which he was searching for flaws. "What's this bloody crank, boy? Some hideous apparatus, I'd warrant."

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," replied Jack diplomatically, hoping that Olivia would appear and smooth things out. He was sure that Lord Placer, who seemed more or less mad, would ruin the thing.

Casting caution to the winds, Lord Placer whirled away at the crank while peering into a funnel-like tube that protruded from the end. His teeth were set and he feared nothing, not even that this was, as he had been led to believe, one of the infernal machines rampant in the city. Amid puffings and whirrings and a tiny momentary tinkling sound, a jet of bright chlorophyll-green helium gas shot from the tube, covering Lord Placer's face and hair with a fine, lime-colored mist.

A howl of outrage issued from Lord Placer's mouth, now hanging open in disbelief. It was an uncanny howl, like that of moaning elf, for the gaseous mixture, for a reason known only to those who delve into the scientific mysteries, had a dismal effect on his vocal cords, an effect not unnoticed by Lord P., who thought himself poisoned and leapt toward the rear door. Winnifred, having heard an indecipherable shriek while lounging on the veranda, was met by Olivia, fresh from a stroll in the rose garden, and the two of them were astounded to see a capering figure of lunacy, eyes awhirl in a green face, come bellowing with an elvish voice into the yard, carrying a spouting device.

Winnifred's worst fears had come to pass. Here was her husband, or so it seemed, gone amok and in a weird disguise. Lady Placer, in a gesture of utter bewilderment, clapped a hand to her mouth and slumped backward onto the lawn. Olivia was no less perplexed, to be sure, but her concern over her mother took precedence over the mystery that confronted her, and she stooped to her aid. Lady Placer was a stout-hearted soul, however, and she was up in a moment. "It's your father," she gasped in a voice that sounded as if it knew strange truths, "go to him, but beware."

Olivia was dumbfounded, but she left her mother in the care of the butler, and launched out in the company of Jack Owlesby (who was, by then, at least as confused as the rest of the company) in pursuit of her father, who was loping some two blocks ahead and still carrying the box.

It was at this point that the odd

thing occurred. Newton, having lost the crowd, still swung along down Regency past stupefied onlookers. He rounded onto Besbourough and crossed John Islip Road, when he saw coming toward him a kindred soul. Here then came Lord Placer in his own pointed cap and with his own machine, rollicking along at an impressive clip. Now apes, as you know, are more intelligent in their way than are dogs, and it's not surprising that Newton, harried through London, saw at once that Lord Placer was an ally. So, with an ape's curiosity, he sped alongside for the space of a half block down toward Vauxhal Bridge, from which Lord Placer intended to throw himself into the river in hopes of diluting the odious solution he'd been doused with. Why he felt it necessary to bathe in the Thames is a mystery until we consider what the psychologists say — that a man in such an addled state might well follow his initial whims, even though careful contemplation would instruct him otherwise.

Inspector Marleybone, the Lord Mayor, and the delegation whipped along in their brougham in the wake of the mob. As is usual in such confusion, many of those out on the chase knew little or nothing of that which they pursued. Rumors of the alien invasion were rampant but often scoffed at, and secondary rumors concerning the march of Islam, and even that the walls of Colney Hatch had somehow burst and released a horde of loonies, were at least as prevalent. Marleybone blanched at the sight of clubs and hay forks, and the Lord Mayor, aghast that London would visit such a riot on the heads of emissaries from another planet, demanded that Marleybone put a stop to the rout; but such a thing was, of course, impossible and they gave off any effort at quelling the mob, and concentrated simply on winning through to the fore and restraining things as best they could. This necessitated, unfortunately, taking a bit of a roundabout route which promoted several dead-ends and a near collision with a milk wagon, but finally they came through, careening around the corner of Bessborough and Grosvenor and sighting the two odd companions hotly pursued by a throng that stretched from the Palace to Millbank. Here they reined in.

The Lord Mayor was unsure as to exactly what course of action to take, considering the size and activity of the crowd and the ghastly duo of cavorting box-carriers that approached. If anyone remembers Jeremy Pike, otherwise Lord Bastable, who served as Lord Mayor from '89 almost until the war, you'll recall that, as the poet said, he had a heart stout and brave, and a rather remarkable speech prepared for the most monstrous audience he was likely to en-

counter.

So the Lord Mayor, with Marleybone at his heels, strode into the road and held up his hands, palms forward, in that symbolic gesture which is universally taken to mean "halt." It is absurd to think that there is any significance to the fact that Newton responded correctly to the signal, despite the suggestion of two noted astronomers, because their theory — the literal universality of hand gestures — lies in Newton's other-worldliness, which, as we know, is a case of mistaken identity. Anyway, the pair of fugitives halted in flight, I believe, because it was at that point, when presented with the delegation, that Lord Placer's eyes ceased to revolve like tops and it looked as if he were "coming around." He was still very much in some nature of psychological shock, as would anyone be if thrown into a like circumstance, but he was keen-witted enough to see that here was the end of the proverbial line. As Lord Placer slowed to a stop, so did Newton, himself happy, I've little doubt, to give up the chase.

The mob caught up with the ambassadorial party in a matter of moments, and there was a great deal of tree climbing and shoulder hoisting and neck craning as the people of London pressed in along the Thames. Marleybone gazed suspiciously at Lord Placer for the space of a minute before being struck with the pop-eyed realization of the gentleman's identity.

"Ha!" shouted the Inspector, reaching into his coat for a pair of manacles. Lord Placer, sputtering, profferred his box to the delegation, but a spurt of green fume and the tick of a timing device prompted a cry of, "The devil!" from Marleybone and, "The Infernal Machine!" from a score of people on the inner perimeter of the crowd, and everyone pressed back, fearing a detonation, and threatening a panic. Another burst of green, however, seemed to indicate that the device had miscarried somehow, and a smattering of catcalls and hoots erupted from the mob.

Lord Placer, at this point, recovered fully. He tugged his cloth cap low over his eyes and winked hugely several times at Olivia as she pushed through to be by his side. Olivia took the winks to be some sort of spasm and cried out, but Jack Owlesby, good lad he, slipped Lord P. a wink of his own, and very decorously tugged Olivia aside and whispered at her. Her father made no effort to rub away the chlorophyllic mask.

The Lord Mayor stepped up, and with a ceremonious bow took the glittering aerator from Lord Placer's outstretched hands. He held the thing aloft, convinced that it was some rare gift, no doubt incomprehensible to an earthling. He trifled with the crank. As another

poof of green shot forth, the crowd broke into applause and began stamping about in glee.

"Londoners!" the Lord Mayor bawled, removing his hat. "This is indeed a momentous occasion." The crowd applauded heartily at this and, like as not, prompted Newton, who stood bewildered, to offer the Lord Mayor his own curiously wrought box.

A bit perturbed at the interruption but eager, on the other hand, to parley with this hairy beast who, it was apparent, hailed from the stars, old Bastable graciously accepted the gift. It was unlike the first box, and the designs drawn upon the outside, although weird, seemed to be of curiously garbed animals: hippoes with toupees and carrying Gladstone Bags, elephants riding in ridiculously small dog-carts, great toads in clam-shell trousers and Leibnitz caps, and all manner of like things. Seeing no other explanation, the Lord Mayor naturally assumed that such finery might be common on an alien star, and with a flourish of his right arm, as if he were daubing the final colours onto a canvas, he set in to give this second box a crank-up.

The crowd waited, breathless. Even those too far removed from the scene to have a view of it seemed to know from the very condition of the atmosphere that what is generally referred to as "a moment in history" was about to occur. Poor Hornby, his feet aching from a morning of activity, gaped on the inner fringe of the circle of onlookers, as Lord Placer, perhaps the only one among the multitude who dared move, edged away toward the embankment.

There was the ratchet click of a gear and spring being turned tighter and tighter until, with a snap that jarred the silence, the top of the box flew open and a tiny ape, singularly clad in a golden robe, and of all things, a night cap not at all unlike Lord Placer's, shot skyward, hung bobbing in mid-air, and, in a piping voice called out Herodotus's cryptic and immortal line: "Fear not, Athenian stranger, because of this marvel!" After uttering the final syllable the ape, as if by magic, popped down into the box, pulling the lid shut after him.

The Lord Mayor stared at Marleybone in frank disbelief, both men awestruck, when Lord Placer, his brass having given out and each new incident compounding his woe, broke for the stairs that led to the causeway below the embankment and sailed like billy-o in the direction of home. About half the mob, eager again for the chase, sallied out in pursuit. When their prey was lost momentarily from view, Jack Owlesby, in a stroke of genius, shouted, "There goes the blighter!" and led the mob around the medical college, thus allowing for Lord Placer's eventual escape.

Marleybone and the Lord Mayor collared Newton, who looked likely to bolt, and were confronted by two out-of-breath constables who reported nothing less than the theft of the space-craft by a white-coated and bearded fellow in spectacles, ostensibly from the museum, who carried official looking papers. Towing Newton into the brougham, the delegation swept away up Millbank to Horseferry, lapped round behind Westminster Hospital and flew north back across Victoria without realising that they were chasing phantoms, that they hadn't an earthly idea as to the identity or the whereabouts of the mysterious thief.

The Lord Mayor pulled his folded speech from his coat pocket and squinted at it through his pince-nez a couple of times, pretty clearly worked up over not having been able to utilize it. Marleybone was in a foul humour, having had his fill of everything that didn't gurgle when tipped upside down. Newton somehow had gotten hold of the jack-in-the-box and, to the annoyance of his companions, was popping the thing off regularly. It had to have been at the crossing of Great George and Abingdon that a dog-cart containing a tall, gaunt gentleman wearing a Tamerlane beret and with an evident false nose plunged alongside and kept pace with the brougham. To the astonishment of the delegation, Newton (a powerful beast) burst the door from its hinges, leapt out running onto the roadway, and clambered in beside Falsenose, whereupon the dog-cart howled away east toward Lambeth Bridge.

The thing was done in an instant. The alien was gone, the infernal machine was gone, the ship, likewise, had vanished, and by the time the driver of the brougham could fathom the cacophony of alarms from within his coach, turn, and pursue a course toward the river, the dog-cart was nowhere to be seen.

A thorough search of the Victoria Embankment yielded an abandoned, rented dog-cart and a putty nose, but nothing else save, perhaps, a modicum of relief for all involved. As we all know, the papers milked the crisis for days, but the absence of any tangible evidence took the wind from their sails, and the incident of "The Ape-box Affair" took its place alongside the other great unexplained mysteries, and was, in the course of time, forgotten.

How Langdon St. Ives (for it was he with the putty nose), his man Hasbro (who masterminded the retrieval of the floating ship), and Newton the orang-outang wended their way homeward is another, by no means slack, story. Suffice it to say that all three and their craft passed out of Lambeth Reach and down the Thames to the sea aboard a hired coal barge,

from whence they made a rather amazing journey to the bay of Humber and then overland to Harrogate.

This little account, then, incomplete as it is, clears up some mysteries — mysteries that the principals of the case took some pains, finally, to ignore. But Lord Placer, poor fellow, is dead these three years, Marleybone has retired to the sea side, and Lord Bastable ... well, we are all aware of his amazing disappearance after the so-called "cataleptic transferrence" which followed his post-war sojourn in Lourdes. What became of Jack Owlesby's pursuit of Olivia I can't say, nor can I determine whether Keeble hazarded the making of yet another amazing device for his plucky niece, who was the very Gibraltar of her family in the months that followed the tumult.

So this history, I hope, will cause no one embarrassment, and may satisfy the curiosities of those who recall "The Horror in St. James Park." I apologize if, by the revelation of causes and effects, what was once marvelous and inexplicable slides down a rung or two into the realm of the commonplace; but such explication is the charge of the historian — a charge I hope to have executed with candor. ●

Science *(cont. from pg. 4)*

don't toss out too casually the centuries of observation, measurement, and thought which culminated in rules which, while they may not be indisputable truth, have at least allowed the Old Guard to compute and publish several thousand correct predictions of planet positions each year for the American Ephemeris and Nautical Almanac. In other words, watch out for your implications.

I'm not trying to preach morals. If you want to write fantasy, go ahead and use Atlantis and Velikovsky, or even revive the "Shaver Mystery" of the forties. If you want to produce something more in the science fiction line, use the saucers or the Triangle or the ancient astronauts. I'm quite ready to read and enjoy your output, as fiction — in the case of the last three, even as the "hard" science fiction I frankly prefer. I'd rather you didn't use the suppressed-by-the-Scientific-Estabishment line, but I don't say that even this is "wrong" or "immoral" or even "dishonest."

Just damn silly. That's an adjective which I don't like to see applied to science fiction. ●

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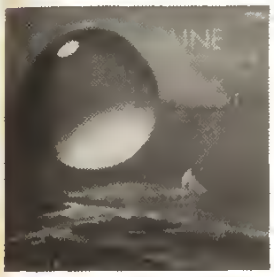

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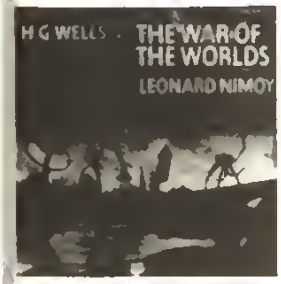

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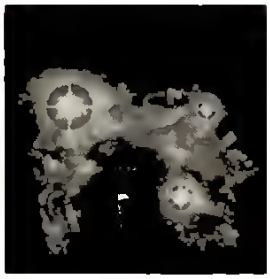

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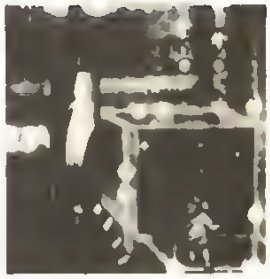

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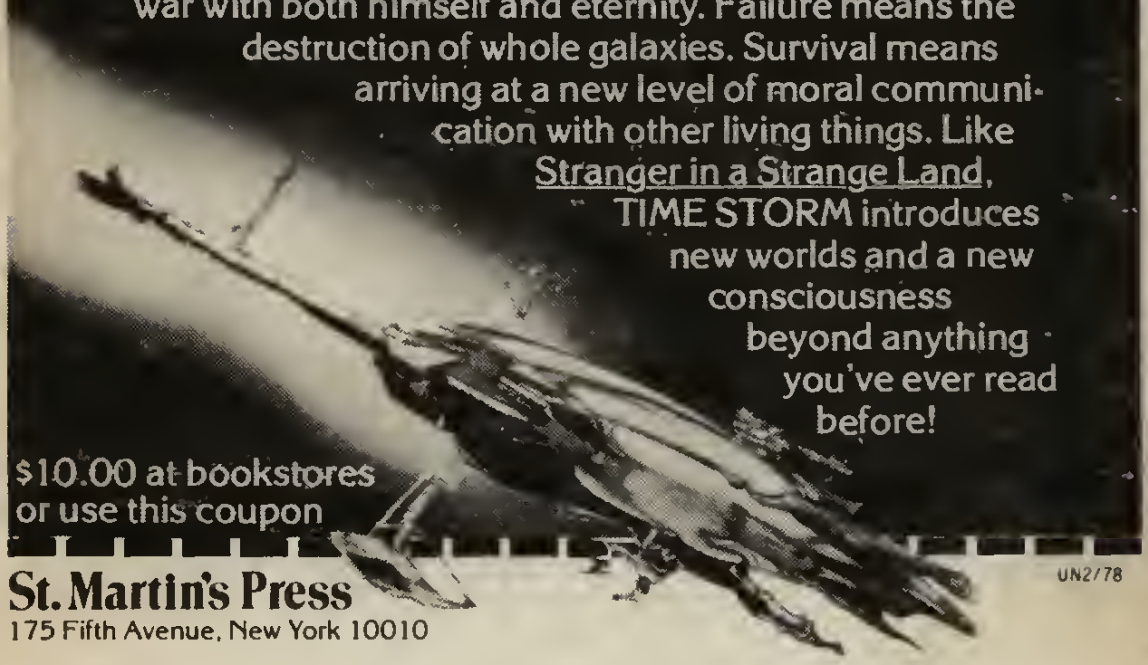

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